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ABSTRACT

This book, which is intended for individuals involved in the education of adults and museum education, explores the potential role of museums in creation of a learning society, possibilities for collaboration between museums and adult education providers, access to museum resources by adult learners, and training and staff development. The following papers are included: "Museums Association" (Mark Taylor); "NIACE [National Institute of Adult Continuing Education]: The National Organisation for Adult Learning" (Alan Tuckett); "Introduction" (Alan Chadwick, Annette Stannett); "Gradgrind Driving Queen Mab's Chariot: What Museums Have (and Have Not) Learnt from Adult Education" (David Anderson); "An Adult Educator's Perspective" (Lalage Bown); "A Museum Educator's Perspective" (Eilean Hooper-Greenhill); "The Adult Learner" (David Jones); "Adult Programmes at the King's Lynn Museums"" (Faye Kalloniatis); "Community-Based Adult Education Programmes at the Geffrye Museum" (Steve Hemming); "Multicultural Education: The Mughal Tent Project at the Victoria and Albert Museum" (Shireen Akbar); "Age Exchange: The Potential of Reminiscence" (Pam Schweitzer); "Museums, Means and Motivation: Adult Learning in a Family Context" (Richard Wood); "Access to Museums by Adult Learners with Disabilities" (William Kirby); "Welcoming Adults with Learning Disabilities at Wakefield Museums and Galleries" (Sarah Scaife); "Programmes for Disadvantaged People at Dulwich Picture Gallery" (Gillian Wolfe); "The Open Museum: A Case Study in Co-operation" (Diana Coben, Margarette Lincoln); "Museum Training Institute" (David Wear) (which includes an appendix titled "A Guide to Underpinning Knowledge and Evidence Requirements"); "City and Guilds of London Institute" (Fiona Longmore); "Work Placements at the National Trust" (Suzanne Whitehead); and "Prospects for Future Collaboration" (Hazel Moffat). The book contains 28 references. (MN)

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# Museums and the Education of Adults

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Alan Chadwick & Annette Stannett
*Editors*

# Museums and the Education of Adults

NIACE
THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR ADULT LEARNING

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# Preface

## 1. Museums Association

*Mark Taylor*

The nineteenth century legislation setting up many of today's municipal museums reflected the paternalism that dominated so much of Victorian society in informing its readers that museums were for 'instruction and recreation'. People may now bristle at the implications of 'instruction'; what it surely reveals is that museums were seen then as educational establishments aimed mainly at adults.

This seems strange in 1995. The pendulum has swung back the other way and to many who work in and with museums it seems that education means school; lectures mean classrooms; interpretation means the National Curriculum, and public service means space for eating packed school lunches. All this is well and good. School-children form a significant proportion of the visitors to British museums, and museums have splendidly and energetically embedded their institutions and artefacts as a fundamental part of children's education.

However, school-age takes up little more than one quarter of our natural life-span. Those who leave learning at the school gates, leave behind intellectual and spiritual advancement, self-awareness and fulfilment. Museums can and must play a part in this fulfilment, and the link to adult education is one of the most important and effective ways for them to do so. Not only can such partnerships often bring museums into contact with a public who may not be regular visitors, but they provide for those working in the field of adult education a vital opportunity to convey their message using exciting concepts and imaginative approaches to objects within museum collections.

Yet for all the potency and promise of such collaboration, this is the first book published within the United Kingdom which addresses such issues. Its contributors are pioneers in the field, and one can only hope that its publication will stimulate a continuing debate which leads to positive outcomes.

# 2. NIACE: The National Organisation for Adult Learning

*Alan Tuckett*

At their best, adult education centres and museums are natural partners in supporting the creation of a learning society. During my adult lifetime museums have more and more recognised and developed their roles as informal educators, to complement their functions in conservation, classification and the support of scholarship. When I ran the Friends' Centre at Brighton, we were privileged to hold classes among the town's superb art deco collection. Like many others across the country, we felt that the collaboration of museum and adult education centre enriched both, and helped students to a more informed and critical engagement with their aesthetic, archaeological, geographical and natural heritage.

I owe my appreciation of the role of museums in enhancing adult education to a late-nineteenth century agitator – Fred Henderson. He was an extraordinary man: interviewed by Gladstone for the post of Poet Laureate; elected as one of the first socialists on the London County Council; and his book *The Case for Socialism* was, with the works of Marx and Engels, the inspiration for the Canadian Socialist Party. When he was given the freedom of the City of Norwich in the 1940s, it made a small item on page 2 of the *Daily Herald*, but was the lead story in the main newspaper of Saskatchewan. Earlier, in the 1880s, Henderson was a key figure in the Socialist League, and was jailed for incitement to riot at the 'Battle of Ham Run' (so called because a policeman giving evidence of public disturbances, where food shops were looted and jewellers' left alone, said he saw a ham run across the hands of the people). Whilst serving his sentence in the jail in Norwich Castle, Henderson collapsed on the treadmill, provoking a parliamentary debate which led to the abolition of the treadmill. As chair of the Committee of Norwich Council responsible for museums after the Second World War, Henderson took delight in correcting the custodians of the newly-opened Castle Museum over the siting of the treadmill.

This story, told *in situ* on a visit to the museum, had the effect of bringing alive my rather ineptly taught course in Labour History

for adults when I was new to the work. I learned then that seeing things at first-hand could bring them alive, like a picture saying at least a thousand words.

This volume is timely and welcome, and should stimulate dialogue between traditions that have much to offer one another. It is the first book in the United Kingdom specifically addressing issues of concern to people working in museum education and in adult education. It appears at a time when the pressure to make Britain a more effectively skilled economy has led to a growth of vocationalism and the increase of credit-bearing courses, at the same time as pressures on local authority budgets have squeezed less formal provision in the field of liberal studies. The gap, it seems, between informal adult learning and formal adult education is widening. Nevertheless, there is more to the learning society than skills at work – though it is noteworthy that Britain earns more from arts and tourism than it does from the motor industry. In an ageing society we need opportunities to prolong critically-engaged active citizenship; to make a better future we need to work together to learn lessons from the past. Some developments in adult learning – in open and distance learning; in the locally-based, peer-group driven accreditation fostered by Open College Networks; in the broad inclusiveness of Adult Learners' Weeks – offer opportunities for future links with museum educators. Developments in publications, in guides for active participation on a museum visit, in co-operative work with local societies, demonstrate that there is much to learn from educational activities in museums.

There is, arguably, a shared need to make opportunities for informal and for structured learning opportunities available to the full range of Britain's communities, to people of all ages, classes, cultures. Since that task is a challenging one, and since resources will always be scarcer than the imagination to make use of them, we must, surely, take *Museums and the Education of Adults* as a challenge to strengthen our links in both theory and practice.

# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| AAM | American Association of Museums |
| ABAPSTAS | Association of Blind and Partially-Sighted Teachers and Students |
| ALBSU | Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. Now the Basic Skills Agency |
| AMC | Area Museums Council |
| ATC | Adult Training Centre |
| BTEC | Business and Technology Education Council |
| ESOL | English for Speakers of Other Languages |
| FEFC | Further Education Funding Council |
| GCSE | General Certificate of Secondary Education |
| GNVQ | General National Vocational Qualification |
| FEFC | Further Education Funding Council |
| GCSE | General Certificate of Secondary Education |
| GNVQ | General National Vocational Qualification |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HMCI | Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools |
| ICOM | International Council of Museums |
| IiP | Investors in People |
| ILB | Industry Lead Body |
| INSET | In-Service Training |
| ITO | Industry Training Organisation |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| MAGDA | Museums and Galleries Disability Association |
| MDA | Museum Documentation Association |
| MGC | Museums and Galleries Commission |
| MTI | Museum Training Institute |
| NCVQ | National Council for Vocational Qualifications |
| NVQ | National Vocational Qualification |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education |
| RNIB | Royal National Institute for the Blind |
| RNID | Royal National Institute for Deaf People |
| SCOTVEC | Scottish Vocational Education Council |
| SKILL | National Bureau for Students with Disabilities |
| SVQ | Scottish Vocational Qualification |
| TVEI | Technical and Vocational Education Initiative |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| WEA | Workers' Educational Association |

# Introduction

*Alan Chadwick & Annette Stannett*

> *The museum should be at once the workshop or study of the pupil, and a place of regular resort for the general public, attracted there by the variety of its interests and the periodical regrouping of its exhibits. The museum thus conceived, is an educational institution of the highest value and should play an important part in the educational life of the community.*[1]

> *Museums should be striving to provide educational experiences for adults. This stems from a belief in education as a core function of museums, together with an adherence to the principle of equal opportunity of access to museums. Museums should seek to provide lifelong education, serving adults as well as children.*[2]

Two mission statements of similar intent – uncontroversial, worthy, looking to the future. Yet there is a remarkable gap between them, a gap of over 75 years. This gave us cause for reflection: had so little been achieved in the intervening years that the second statement was still necessary? Had the concerns of adult education and museums really not come closer together?

The genesis of this book lies in our shared belief that there is, in the UK, still a paucity of information about how those working in the fields of adult education and museum education can and do make their contributions to the adult public in order to enhance knowledge, understanding and enjoyment.

In the main, museum educators have placed their emphasis on the perceived needs of school children; most recently, this has been emphasised by the attention given to the National Curriculum and documented by the Group for Education in Museums (GEM). By comparison, little has been written by museum educators or adult educators concerning the potential benefits of the vast resources of museums for adults.

The title of the book is significant: it seeks to encompass more than a discussion of the role of museums *in* adult education which would appear to subsume museums; and also more than museums

*and* adult education which might confine the topic to the formal provision of the latter. Our aim is to focus more comprehensively on educational provision for adults and engagement with them in a variety of settings. Consequently we approached a wide range of potential contributors to this work and accepted papers varying in compass, style and format, so as to provide general overviews as well as illustrations of current practice with different sectors of the adult community.

In the context of this book we have taken a museum (or gallery) to be 'an institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit' (as defined by the Museums Association), and the *education of adults* as referring to:

> *any educational process undertaken by adults, whether liberal, general or vocational, and located in the spheres of adult, further or higher education or outside the institutional framework entirely (Jarvis, 1995:22).*

From the concepts of *museums* and *adult education* to the central focus of the book: *adult learners*. Who are they? What motivates them? And – in particular – what characteristics distinguish them from learners of a younger age? An understanding of such differences is essential for maximising the potential of educational initiatives in and with museums. David Jones' brief introduction to this theme (Chapter 4) serves as a bridge between the overviews comprising Chapters 1–3, and the examples from practice which follow.

Our request for contributions, publicised in *Adults Learning* and *GEM News*, elicited a good response from the field of museum education, and almost none from that of adult education, which supported our view that there was a need for restoring the balance between the two areas of learning which, as David Anderson describes, had collaborated successfully in the past. The fact that this book is published by NIACE should help in this process of realignment.

It must be stressed that in a volume of this size it is not possible to present more than snapshots from the various contexts. The intention is that they should serve as stimuli to raise awareness of the present position, of the philosophy and theories that underpin it, and of the tremendous potential for future collaboration.

From the examples given, it is clear that the initiative for working together is largely taken by museum educators. Several programmes, such as those at Wakefield and the Geffrye Museum, have evolved as the result of trial and error – which in itself is recognised as a productive learning experience for the educator. It seems that once an approach has been made by museums to adult communities, it is welcomed, with the result that collaborative projects with providers of formal adult education are gaining in number and prestige. The mutually beneficial programme offered jointly by the National Maritime Museum and Goldsmiths College, described and assessed from the viewpoint of both institutions, is an example of such initiative. Similarly, the work undertaken at/with King's Lynn and Wakefield demonstrates the possibilities of museums and other educational institutions collaborating in the interest of their adult communities. What Hazel Moffat calls 'partnership' is gaining in strength.

But partnerships must also occur within museums themselves. From a number of recent surveys, including that undertaken for this book and discussed by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, it is clear that the role of an adult educator in a museum setting has, to date, not been adequately acknowledged – indeed, there are still many museums without an education officer *per se*, although it is encouraging to note that several institutions (e.g. English Heritage, the National Trust) have recently made appointments with adult education as the specialism. In many quarters the rationale seems to have been that all museum work is perceived to be educational, and/or that curators fulfil educational functions as part of their remit. However, such perceptions have come under increasing pressure, as evidenced by the creation of the Museum Training Institute and the introduction of NVQs for all levels of staff. As Chadwick (1980:113) points out:

> *The training of museum staff, particularly those directly in contact with, or having policy responsibilities for, the public, must be introduced from directorial to attendant level.*

The MTI, the lead body for the museum profession, outlines its programme in Chapter 6. However, although the MTI has stated its rationale, its policy has not yet been sufficiently developed, as David Anderson points out. The City & Guilds of London Institute describes one aspect of professional training; and the National

Trust contribution to the theme is an example of staff training on its own premises, in collaboration with outside institutions. All highlight the importance of staff development and training for successful collaborative work inside museums and in the wider community. Yet, while training and staff development opportunities are available for both those working in museums and adult education, there appears to be little recognition by either one of the other sector's strengths or requirements.

If there is to be greater collaboration between the two professions then a major responsibility will lie with those tasked with designing and presenting training and staff development programmes both within and, one might hope, between the sectors.

One group of adults within the community mentioned above upon whose needs much attention is focused is that of the disadvantaged. The manifold programmes described in Chapter 5 demonstrate the wide range of activities currently undertaken or planned for the future. Kirby gives an overview of facilities in place or envisaged for disabled museum visitors; Scaife at Wakefield Museums gives a personal view of a novice's approach to working with one sector of the disabled, while ongoing programmes for the unemployed (Dulwich) and for ethnic minorities (Geffrye, V&A) point to the potential of such initiatives; Dulwich has been spectacularly successful in raising sponsorship (and hence awareness) for its work; the V&A's Mughal Tent project has spread to other communities beyond the United Kingdom.

It is encouraging to see that the mutual benefits of such collaborative schemes are being recognised. Both sides learn, as exemplified by the Geffrye and Wakefield Museums who clearly state that they, the museum 'educators', are benefiting from the 'learners' ' contributions, while, conversely, the professionals in King's Lynn's educational institutions, and at Goldsmiths College, benefit from the museums' input. Such two-way learning is further illustrated by the work of Age Exchange, where the elderly and children learn from each other, facilitated by the organisers – who learn from both sides. Richard Wood, too, in his overview of learning in family groups, emphasises the multi-strand learning which can be observed in different settings and notes, crucially, that 'people learn best what they most enjoy' – a factor not to be underestimated.

One additional benefit in many contexts should be highlighted: a number of case studies (Dulwich, Age Exchange, Geffrye, V&A)

show that adult learners may gain not only in specific knowledge but also in general self-confidence, which should help them in their daily lives. This is something that cannot be measured easily, or evaluated statistically, but should be seized upon by educators working in museums and their communities. It should encourage them to look beyond institutional confines and to insist on more dialogue between the various parties, including discussions with consortia of external organisations; to think laterally along lines of producing and promoting publications suitable for adults who may wish to follow up initial specific quests for knowledge with wider learning opportunities.

The concept of lifelong learning has been mentioned in the text and, significantly, 1996 has been designated the European Year of Lifelong Learning by the European Union. While this volume has concentrated on the education of adults, this is but one strand in the provision of learning opportunities for children and adults alike. Such opportunities have particular significance for museums, given that they seem to be the only institutions with some educational responsibilities on offer to all age groups simultaneously. In harmony with the concept of lifelong learning, they, too, cater for both formal and informal learning experiences.

Yet in order to achieve synergy between museums and providers of adult education and, in a 'bridging' sense, family education, there must be a greater overall coherence where principles and policies are sufficiently similar so as to ensure the implementation of successful educational strategies. This assumes that there is the necessary political will to ensure that in an increasingly service-oriented economy, and 'greying' society, the necessity of providing resources to directly assist collaborative educational projects will be recognised and positively acted upon.

The field for the politician, the museologist, the adult educator is wide open. The time is opportune. There is no reason why museums should not 'play an important part in the educational life of the community' in order to help 'provide lifelong education'.

We hope that this book will assist in pointing the way.

## *Acknowledgements*

We are most grateful to all contributing authors, to Alison Cole (Museums and Galleries Commission), Laura Hetherington (National Trust) and Vicky Woollard (formerly Geffrye Museum), and to NIACE for publishing this book. Our particular thanks go to Christopher Feeney, NIACE Senior Publications Officer, for his invaluable help with and support for the publication in many different ways.

## *Notes*

1. *The 1919 Report: the Final and Interim reports of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction 1918–1919*, University of Nottingham, Department of Adult Education, 1980, p 147.
2. Alison Coles, Museums and Galleries Commission: private correspondence, 3 March 1995.

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Chadwick, A.F. (1980) *The Role of the Museum and Art Gallery in Community Education*, University of Nottingham, Department of Adult Education.

Jarvis, P. (1995) *Adult and Continuing Education: Theory and practice*, 2nd ed., Routledge.

CHAPTER 1

# Gradgrind Driving Queen Mab's Chariot: What Museums Have (and Have Not) Learnt from Adult Education

*David Anderson*

This chapter will try to establish two important propositions. The first is that museum learning is impoverished by its relative isolation from current adult education theory and practice. The second is that museum learning, if properly developed, could in turn greatly enrich the learning programmes provided by the adult education sector.

Museum learning here should be understood to be broadly defined and to include:

- all of those facilities, services and activities, such as teaching programmes and publications, provided for formal or non-formal educational users including adults, whether as individuals or in groups
- facilities, services and activities, such as gallery talks and trails, for informal educational users including adults, where these are provided solely or mainly for educational purposes and involve a structured learning process
- the educational dimension of important museum functions such as gallery and exhibition displays, where structured learning is a principal objective.

However, museum education should also be understood to encompass the education of museum staff as adult learners. Adult learning in turn is understood to be equally broadly defined, so as

to encompass vocational as well as non-vocational education, and adult self-education outside any institutional framework as well as learning by adults involving a mediator inside an institution, alone or in groups.

At a conference held at the Whitworth Art Gallery in 1993, design historians (mostly university-based) and museum curators debated the nature of art and design. Fundamental to the conference – but not fully articulated – was the concept of different ways of knowing. The design historians were extremely effective in deploying theory to support their arguments; the curators, by contrast, relied heavily upon the practical knowledge gained from long contact with collections. Yet, as some design historians pointed out, curators seemed to find it very difficult to explain *how* they did what they did or *why* they were doing it. It was suggested that the inability of curators to theorise the nature of their work pointed to a lack of self-examination on their part, and a lack of an awareness of the need for change. Museums needed theory to enable the individual disciplines relevant to their collections to relate to the bigger picture, and so to make links with other disciplines.

Throughout the conference, the proponents of theoretical knowledge had the upper hand. Curators had no difficulty in demonstrating that they had a profound understanding of their collections, but for the most part failed to explain the nature of this alternative, object-based way of knowing. They could have defended their profession and the academic value of their work, had they been able to deploy alternative learning theories to explain how they knew what they knew, and why it was significant in the context of a public museum. But they did not do so, and were left to fight the battle on ground of their opponents' own choosing. One was left wondering why so many museum professionals seemed to be unaware of the difference – and significance – of the kind of learning that goes on in museums as distinct from that which takes place in universities. One also had to ask why it was that museum educators had not identified this as an area of common interest with curators and had not done more to help museums articulate the ways of knowing which they can support.

This problem has a parallel in what can be observed in some museums during the process of development of new galleries. It is now increasingly common for major museums to form teams with collective responsibility for the creation of a new gallery. As well as curators, these often include educators and marketing staff, and

sometimes also invited academic experts. Again, one can observe the conflicting perspectives of different specialists, with some team members (often curators) arguing that the rationale for the display should come from the nature and strengths of the collection, others (often marketing staff) proposing that the gallery content and design should be chosen to appeal to the largest numbers of visitors, and others still (often academic specialists) urging that it should be the theoretical issues and concepts currently believed to be the most important to the discipline (such as the concepts of 'consumption' and 'politesse' in the history of design in the eighteenth century) which should be given prominence. These conflicts have not proved easy to resolve. This is in part because they often reflect the political struggles within institutions between different professional groups and in part because of the inability of different functional groups in museums to identify that their conflicts are also theoretical in origin. But, more fundamentally, they also reflect the failure of museums to articulate their role in society and to develop and integrate the contributions of different specialists. And that is an issue which is of crucial importance when one considers the role of museums as (potentially) educational institutions, and the relevance of the adult education sector to museums.

A survey of 566 museums in the UK conducted recently as part of the forthcoming National Report on Museum Education (to be published in 1996) showed that most museums (56 per cent) had no member of staff (educator or other) whose sole or primary responsibility was education.[1] A quarter of museums (25 per cent) had full-time staff and one fifth (19 per cent) had part-time staff with some educational responsibilities. But only 3.6 per cent of all museum staff in the museums which responded were museum educators or other staff whose main responsibility was education. They were outnumbered by another 11 per cent of staff, mainly curators, who were not museum educators or other staff whose main responsibility was education. The survey also provided useful data on the kind of services provided by museums for adults. After services for children aged 5–12 (provided by 60 per cent of institutions), lectures and courses for adults were the commonest education service offered by museums (57 per cent), closely followed by publications and other resources for adults (offered by 54 per cent). However, only 9 per cent of museums surveyed provided events or teaching programmes for minority communities, and only 7 per cent provided publications or other resources for them.

It is also significant that many of those institutions which provide services for adults or minority community groups do not consider these services to be essential. The survey for the National Report on Museum Education also provided valuable data on the training of staff. Nearly three-quarters of museums (71 per cent) have no structured programme for staff development. Fourteen per cent more have such a programme but do not include an educational element. Only 15 per cent of museums have a staff development programme with an education element.

To sum up, the data gathered by this questionnaire survey are important for several reasons. Firstly, they show that if museum learning is to be defined broadly and as a lifelong process, a majority of museums already regard themselves as providers of museum learning services for adults. However, secondly, the majority of these adult services are formal, traditional lectures or courses. Thirdly, three-quarters of the providers of these services for adults are not specialist educators but curators and other professionals, very few of whom will have had any previous training in education. Fourthly, the commitment of many institutions to the services they do provide for adults is not strong. And, fifthly, few institutions provide staff development programmes which would enable specialist educators or non-specialists to enhance their skills and understanding of their work as educators of adults.

These data suggest that there are significant obstacles to the development of closer links between museums and the specialist adult education sector. Yet, the survey done for the National Report on Museum Education also suggests that over 70 per cent of museum visitors are adults, alone, with other adults in groups, or with children. How is it that there is such a wide gap between the educational needs of this vast adult audience, representing perhaps 60–70 million museum users each year nationwide, and the relatively limited services offered by museums? And how has it come about that so few museum staff seem to be aware of the significance of adult learning for their work? An historical perspective is essential.

There has always been a tension between preservation and access, between private research and public education, between elitism and social purpose, and between museum staff and museum users. This tension is vividly illustrated by an incident in the history of the British Museum. In 1848, when the Chartists were converging on Parliament, the authorities took extraordinary steps to

defend the museum. It was given a garrison of museum staff (who were sworn in as special constables), troops and Chelsea pensioners, all of whom were armed and provisioned for a long campaign behind special fortifications (Millar, 1974). This incident was characteristic of an attitude at the British Museum – and other museums – of mingled fear and distaste in its dealings with the public during this period.

The radicalism, in both educational and political terms, of opening first the Great Exhibition in 1851 and, soon after, the South Kensington Museum in 1857, is immediately apparent. In his address on 'The Functions of the Science and Art Department' on 16 November 1857, Henry Cole, the new director, declared that 'this museum will be like a book with its pages open, and not shut' (Cole, 1857). He added that, 'An observation of the evening visitors clearly proves, that a large portion of them are not of a class who can frequent public museums in the daytime, excepting at Christmas and Easter holidays. On Monday nights especially, great numbers are strictly of the working classes, to whom a day's visit would entail the loss of a day's wages, unless they happen to be out of work.' He then went on to express regret that workers were not present in greater numbers.

The fact that the public galleries are not as much used by the working classes as could be wished is also confirmed by some returns of workmen's attendance at the National Gallery, which were furnished to the Commissioners for determining the site of the National Gallery. Out of 719 workmen employed by 23 firms of all trades – butchers, upholsterers, locksmiths, builders, brewers and the like – only 316 visited the National Gallery in a year, whilst 403 workmen did not. (Today the National Gallery would, one hopes, be proud if nearly 50 per cent of working people in London visited the museum in a year.) Cole then noted with pride that:

> *In the evening, the working man comes to this museum [the South Kensington Museum] from his one or two dimly lighted, cheerless dwelling rooms, in his fustian jacket, with his shirt collars a little trimmed up, accompanied by his threes and fours and fives of little fustian jackets, a wife, in her best bonnet, and a baby, of course, under her shawl.*

It is clear from this and numerous other writings by Henry Cole that he was engaged on a massive experiment in public education, of which adult education was the principal part. 'Unless

museums and galleries are made subservient to the purpose of education, they dwindle into very sleepy affairs', he said later in his life (quoted in Morris, 1986).

A vital part of Henry Cole's system – and the reason why the story of the Department of Practical Art (later the Science and Art Department) is of such importance even today – was the close integration of the national network of the Schools of Science and Art with the South Kensington Museum. This model of public education and training, which became known as the 'South Kensington System', was widely imitated in Britain and abroad.[2] It was a system that was not without its critics. The rigidity of its fundamental principles of art education – which required unbending adherence to a programme consisting initially of a mixture of the grammar of ornament, linear geometry, botany, chemistry and the history of design (Frayling, 1987) – were satirised by Charles Dickens in *Hard Times*, with Cole himself probably the prototype for 'the Government Officer'. As Dickens wrote to Cole in 1854:

> *I often say to Mr Gradgrind, that there is reason and good intention in much that he does – in fact in all that he does – but that he overdoes it. Perhaps by dint of his going his way and my going mine, we shall meet at last at some halfway house where there are flowers on the carpets, and a little standing room for Queen Mab's chariot among the Steam Engines (ibid.).*

Ruskin was less charitable, and wrote some years later that 'the Professorship of Henry Cole ... has corrupted the system of art-teaching all over England into a statement of abortion and falsehood from which it will take twenty years to recover' (*ibid.*). Yet Cole's achievement in establishing the South Kensington Museum, developing a circulating collection for loan to the Schools of Art, encouraging and supporting the development of museums in the regions, and forging close links between the Department, the Schools and the museums, provided the country with an educational resource that has survived to the present. Cole also showed how much could be done when, as in the mid-nineteenth century, government had faith in the potential of education to transform society and applied both resources and the energies of some of its most able administrators to the achievement of that goal.

In the first report of the Department of Practical Art, Cole published the results of enquiries among gold and silver manufacturers on the value of classes on ornamental design (Cole, 1853), and of a

survey of the Schools to find out if they had museums attached. He also published in this report a detailed analysis of the students of the Schools, which showed the extraordinary range of their occupations, from japanners to governesses among females, and from shoe-makers to surgeons among males. Most students were aged between 15 and 30. Another essential part of Cole's scheme was a programme of public lectures and demonstrations at the South Kensington Museum and in the provinces, to which all professors were required to contribute. In 1858, the year after the opening of the museum, for example, three series of public lectures were arranged at South Kensington. The first series explained the purpose of the Department of Practical Art. The second and third series, on 'the Uses of the Animal Museum' and 'the Fine Arts', were directed especially to working men, for whom 350 seats were reserved at each. 'The Lecture Theatre has been crowded, frequently inconveniently so,' Cole reported (Cole, 1858). During 1861 and early 1862 the Museum at South Kensington offered to the public 20 lectures on the history of ancient art, 24 lectures on human form, 20 lectures on the history of medieval and modern art, six lectures mainly for school teachers on science, as well as a series on principles and elements, and another on historic styles (Cole, 1862).

The Science and Art Department in South Kensington provided solid, and often vitally important, support to local societies and institutes in developing their own adult educational programmes. In particular it provided funds to support the foundation of new Schools of Science and Art and developed the work of existing institutions through the loans of objects mentioned above as, well as the provision of funds, travel scholarships and training for teachers. It is notable that the curator to the museum of the Royal Institution of Cornwall – a post usually held by scholars of working-class background – devoted much of his time to teaching classes of adults (Stephens and Roderick, 1983). As the Royal Institution's *Journal* noted in 1890:

> *The classes are immediately connected with the Science and Art Department, South Kensington, and are remarkably well attended, there being 33 names registered for botany, 24 for hygiene, 17 for mineralogy, and 12 for geology. These lectures are replete teaching matter, and have the advantage of being based on university teaching methods (ibid.).*

In part this explosion in both vocational and liberal, non-vocational education was the result of visits by staff from South Kensington, such as Mr Buckmaster, who was sent to Cornwall in 1860 to encourage the Royal Institution to 'explain and advocate the method now adopted by the Government for promoting the introduction of elementary science teaching among working men' (*ibid.*). Such initiatives of local societies in the field of working-class education, made possible by the support of a central Department which was as yet too weak to take a direct initiative on its own account at a local level, was one of the features of this period. These conditions helped to foster collaborations between museums, libraries and schools of art and science in towns and cities across the country which were eroded later in the nineteenth century as a result of subsequent national educational initiatives. As Stephens and Roderick have noted, the creation of public libraries and museums likewise undermined this function of literary and philosophical societies as institutions of public education.

The Art Museum in the Ancoats area of Manchester (a very poor working-class district) was, like many other museums, intended to guide working people in the appreciation of form and beauty, and also to influence their choice of things used in their homes. However, the founders believed that the displays alone could not achieve these objectives. In order to develop the educational use of the collections, members of the Committee conducted parties through the museum, and slide-lantern lectures were introduced (Chadwick, 1983). Free woodcarving, clay modelling and drawing classes were held in the winter, and the results were exhibited in the museum. T.C. Horsfall, the museum's moving spirit, had not wanted his museum to be dominated by middle-class support, but inevitably the interests and values of middle-class staff and helpers, and the influence of visitors from beyond Ancoats, ultimately thwarted this objective.

It is difficult now to assess the effectiveness of Horsfall's Art Museum and hundreds of similar initiatives in public education in nineteenth century museums. No systematic efforts were made to evaluate their success, beyond noticing the numbers of people who took up these opportunities. As Alan Chadwick noted:

> *Horsfall's intentions, excellent in theory, were both difficult to implement and to judge, in practice ... it would be dangerous to attempt a pronouncement on the success or failure of Horsfall's*

> *institution in purely measurable terms, for the aesthetic, educational or recreational value of the offer would surmount such computations.*

Nevertheless, he went on to say that:

> *those visitors to nineteenth century museums from the 'lower orders' in general had neither the leisure nor the prerequisite knowledge of these collectors from previous centuries ... The notion of establishing collections for study by Mechanics' Institutes was ... a useful one, although in common with contemporary display methods they were usually haphazard and often irrelevant ... The debate as to whether museums were the means by which mankind in general could be more fully enabled to understand their world was to continue into the twentieth century (Chadwick, 1983).*

An anecdote by Dr John Brown, the nineteenth century essayist, provides a critique of Henry Cole's great experiment and an appropriate conclusion to this historical review of the role of museum in public education. It reflects upon the educational philosophy which underlay the whole South Kensington system and succinctly summarises a debate about the nature of museum learning which has continued throughout the following 140 years. One day Brown went to inspect a school in the Scottish Highlands, and examined the pupils on their general knowledge. The boys were bored and sulky until suddenly, when discussing the Sheffield cutlery industry, Brown produced a knife. 'I sent it round, and finally presented it to the enraptured Dougal. Would not each one of these boys, the very boobiest there, know that knife again when they saw it?' (Brown, 1907). Brown contrasted this example of education through the senses with the educational efforts of the South Kensington Museum in the first years of its existence. 'If any one wishes to know how far wise and clever and patriotic men may occasionally go in the way of giving "your son" a stone for bread, and serpent for a fish ... let him take a turn through certain galleries of the Kensington Museum'. Brown then described the displays seen by a friend of an 'Analysis of a Man' consisting of a bottle of water, albumen, lime, fat, haematin, fibrine, salt, carbon etc. 'And so with the analysis of bread, &c., &c. What earthly good can this do anyone? No wonder that the bewildered beings whom I have

seen wandering through these rooms, yawned more frequently and more desperately than I ever observed even in church'.

Unfortunately, displays of the kind Brown describes at the South Kensington museum which assume that it is necessary to tell people something for them to engage in learning, are still to be faced in many museums.

In the nineteenth century museums were much more closely integrated with the adult education sector than is the case today. Central government – and large numbers of the professional and educated classes at a local level – had put their faith in education through museums as an essential means to achieve social and commercial improvement. William Morris, a key figure in the development of the V&A's collections, had in the early days celebrated the fact that 'here [at the V&A] things are only wanted for educational purposes and not as commodities' (quoted in Morris, 1986). Yet Morris, in his later, revolutionary phase, and others became disillusioned with museums as instruments of social change in the 1880s and 1890s, whilst the administrators in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries placed their hopes instead on the rapidly developing formal education sector as a better means to achieve their social and industrial goals. The fragmentation of the Science and Art Department from Henry Cole's integrated educational instrument into its constituent parts was nearly completed in 1979 when the V&A's Circulation Department closed, and entirely so in 1984 when the Department of Education and Science passed control of the V&A and other museums it administered to the Office of Arts and Libraries. But these changes were of symbolic significance only; the real parting had come much earlier, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the development of the formal education systems in Britain had made museums seem redundant as instruments of public education, and the curatorial functions of museums had become increasingly separated from their educational functions.

The separation of museums from developments in the adult education sector has meant that museums in general (there are, of course, individual exceptions) have failed to keep in touch with best practice in adult education, or with the research that has supported it. Perhaps equally damaging, museums have been deprived of the energy, commitment and sense of purpose that have been characteristic of the adult education movement in this century. But, at the same time, the adult education sector has also failed to utilise

one of its most important educational resources. The impoverishment has been mutual.

The belief in the museum profession that staff needed training in the study of the objects in their collections, but not in how the public learn from those collections or about the disciplines those collections represent, has persisted into the present day. It is a belief that, to judge by the current training standards for museum staff developed by the Museum Training Institute, seems to be as deeply rooted as ever (see Chapter 6.1).

These standards place the collections – not the public – very firmly at the centre of the museum process and contain the following main sections:

> *Undertake research related to collection. Develop and implement information systems to facilitate access to the collection. Develop the collection. Accommodate and transfer items. Preserve items and collection. Provide people with opportunities to understand and appreciate the collection. Care for users and items. Develop and maintain the organisation. Manage projects to deliver organisational requirements. Contribute to the protection and interpretation of the collection (Museum Training Institute, 1995).*

Throughout the standards, the public are perceived as passive recipients of the interpretations of the collections generated by the museum. The efforts of some educators and others over recent years to ensure a proper balance between the needs of the public, the institution and the collections in these standards have, so far, failed. The case for a more inclusive approach to both the theory and the practice has clearly not yet been made successfully.

We museum educators must take some of the responsibility for this. We have failed to address the problem of the nature of museum learning, by continuing to use models of direct teaching drawn from the classroom. We have also failed to explore systematically the potential of adult education learning theories and methodologies that are relevant to the distinctive learning needs of the majority of museum visitors (who are adults).

These deficiencies must now be remedied. The most important step which must be taken is to try to establish the nature of object-based learning – the process in which Cole and other reformers placed such faith in the nineteenth century (however misguided they were in their practice); the process which, in turn, John

Brown used in his critique of the South Kensington Museum; and the process which still provides a rationale for our work in museums today. There are two principal directions for this investigation – both mentioned earlier. They are: the existing body of theories and practice developed by adult educators; and the research which could be undertaken by museums themselves into the process of object learning.

Firstly, what can museums learn from the existing bodies of theories and practice developed by adult educators? The field is so huge that any attempt at a comprehensive list of these would be futile. It is, therefore, necessary to focus on some important issues that are of particular relevance to museums. Museums are distinctive learning environments, intellectually structured yet object-rich and very varied, used by visitors, often in small groups of mixed sexes, ages and subject expertise with very diverse learning styles and prior learning experiences, whose participation in the learning process as adults is usually voluntary. This combination of characteristics distinguishes museums from all other educational institutions, but the individual elements are generally not unique (which is one of the reasons why a better understanding of the adult learning process in museums could also be relevant to adult learning in other settings).

Stephen Brookfield's research on adult learning is highly relevant to museums. In *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* (1986) he comments that, 'Learning activities and learning styles vary so much with physiology, culture, and personality that generalised statements about the nature of adult learning have very low predictive power'. He summarises the findings of research on adult learning: that adults learn throughout their lives; that they exhibit diverse learning styles; that they like their learning activities to be problem-centred, meaningful to their lives, and immediately applicable; that their learning is affected by prior experiences; that effective learning is linked to the adult's self-concept of him/herself as a learner; and that adults tend towards self-directedness in their learning. However, he warns that, 'To base a comprehensive theory of adult learning on observations of white, middle-class Americans in continuing or extension education classes in the post-second world war era is conceptually and empirically naive'. He adds that, 'Even within North American culture the empirical accuracy of generalisations about adult learning principles is highly questionable in that we have few studies of the learning

styles of Native Americans, white working class adults, Hispanics, blacks or orientals.' Given the increasing importance of issues of cultural diversity in museums, this places a significant limit on the value of research on adult learning to museums. Brookfield also comments that it is not yet possible even to identify verifiable differences in learning style between children and adults. On the other hand, studies of adult educators have found a correlation between the principles of adult education proposed by researchers and current practice in the classroom, especially if the teacher has been trained in adult education. This suggests that an investment by museums in the training of their staff in the principles of adult education would also have a positive impact on museum practice.

The implications of research into andragogy – the learning adults undertake naturally, when they are not being taught (but not necessarily without support) – and other aspects of adult learning have already been explored in some detail in the AAM's groundbreaking book, *Museums, Adults and the Humanities* (Collins, 1981). Museums, being resource-rich educational settings, are ideal centres for the andragogic approaches advocated by Malcolm Knowles (1981), which assume that the direction of the learning process is towards self-directed learning, managed so far as possible by the learner, drawing upon the learner's own experiences, task- or problem-centred, and motivated by internal incentives and curiosity. The problem, of course, is that the assumptions made by many museums about their audiences are often exactly the opposite: namely, that the process is expert-directed; that visitors are dependent upon the expert; that the prior experience of members of the public is irrelevant unless they happen to be experts on the subject as well; that the public wants information about the collections essentially for its own sake rather than for any practical purpose related to the rest of their lives; and that if the visitor is not successful in acquiring the concepts and information selected by the expert then – provided these have been expressed clearly – this is not the fault of the institution. In short, museums are clinging to pedagogic methods in a context which most visitors tend to use in an andragogic manner. And this conflict between museum provision and visitor capability is most acute in the case of adults. An environment which is ideally suited to the development of divergent thinking and creative intelligence is often used instead to try to promote fact-oriented convergent thinking. The consequences are not just educational, but may have a direct impact also on the

institution. By limiting public participation, a museum deprives itself of a large constituency of adults who could have enriched their lives if appropriate educational opportunities had been available, and who would have rewarded the institution with their active support.

However, Brookfield challenges uncritical acceptance of the concept of successful self-directed learners as individuals who take the initiative in designing learning experiences, diagnosing needs, locating resources and evaluating learning. He distinguishes between 'field-independent' learners, who are analytical, socially independent, inner-directed, individualistic and possessed of a strong sense of self-identity, and 'field-dependent' learners, who are extrinsically oriented, responsive to external reinforcement, aware of context, who view things holistically and are cognisant of the effect their learning has on others. Field-dependent learners, he notes, are said to be found in Mexican and Native American cultures, whereas white American and Northern European cultures support field-independent functions. A field-independent learning style was also perceived by educators to be more democratic, characteristic of mature adulthood and laudable than field-dependent learning styles. Yet Brookfield (1986) found that successful self-directed learning was most likely to occur in field-dependent learners, who developed their knowledge through learning networks based on face-to-face encounters, without employing abstract conceptualisations. Brookfield also found in his research on successful self-directed learners that they reported that random, accidental events were often significant in revealing new learning paths – a finding which suggests that museums (which provide so many opportunities for stimulating but unexpected encounters with objects and works of art), may be excellent environments for this kind of learning.

Museums must address inter-cultural issues, firstly, because all museums have, potentially, audiences from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and, secondly, because many museum collections include objects from different cultures. Some museums such as the V&A (see Shireen Akbar's contribution to this volume), the Tate Gallery in Liverpool and Cartwright Hall in Bradford are now placing much more emphasis on this aspect of their work, and some of these initiatives have been informed by educational practice in Asia, Africa and other non-Western regions. But the influence of non-Western models was felt much earlier in the adult

education field. Lalage Bown (1984) has suggested that there are four strands of international thought on adult learning which emerged as the result of the influence of delegates from non-Western countries and non-Western conferences. These are:

- the placing of adult education in the context of lifelong learning instead of regarding education as a preparation for life and adult education as a remedial exercise
- the acceptance of a very broad definition of adult education
- the relationship of adult education to public policy, and in particular to development policy
- the display of concern for positive action in favour of the educationally underprivileged.

One consequence of the influence of non-Western adult education methodologies has been a far greater emphasis on the social and political role of adult learning – a perspective adult education institutions have been far more ready than museums to accept as relevant to their work. As Julius Nyerere has written:

> *Education has to increase men's [sic] physical and mental freedom – to increase their control over themselves, their own lives, and the environment in which they live. The ideas imported by education, or released in the mind through education, should therefore be liberating ideas. Nothing else can properly be called education. Teaching which induces a slave mentality or a sense of importance is not education at all – it is an attack on the minds of men (Nyerere, 1976).*

The work of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is an example of a programme in which adult education and economic development go hand in hand. The philosophy of the bank is the opposite of that of most banks: it lends only to those who are so poor that they have few or no possessions. As a bank it is extremely successful – all but one or two per cent of its loans are repaid – but more important from a museum education perspective is its social and educational impact. The bank is now established in most villages in Bangladesh. It has transformed the lives of the poor and especially the women who now make up 90 per cent of the recipients of loans. The bank's success in organising and empowering the poor rests on its network of thousands upon thousands of groups of villagers, who must approve any loan to a member of their group and

who undertake to repay the loan if the borrower does not. The Grameen Bank has been phenomenally successful by the standards of comparable social and educational programmes in the West. Yet the educational methodologies it uses with its adult members – largely rote-learning and controlled role-play – have been out of favour in education in the UK for many decades.

Of course, one should not assume that methodologies developed by the Grameen Bank in rural Bangladesh can be used in any museum education programme in the UK. However, some of the general principles – such as commitment to social change, a people-based mission closely related to participant needs, long-term rather than short-term goals, commitment from the organisation, development of programmes through groups with strong existing social networks, delegation of much decision-making to participants and a clear philosophy which is understood by everyone involved and underpins the whole project – certainly could apply to projects involving the Bangladeshi community in the UK, and to other communities as well.[3] Another aspect of cultural difference which is of significance to education in museums is in our concept of the senses. We often talk of museum learning as 'learning from the senses' as if this was somehow to learn in a universal way. But Constance Classen in her book *Worlds of Sense* (1993) has studied the different roles of the senses in history and across cultures. She shows that the dominance of the visual sense in Western culture, which she attributes to the importance of writing, should not be taken as characteristic of all cultures. She argues that rather than being a purely biological function, perception is shaped by and is an expression of cultural values. People from different cultures may, then, experience objects, and museums, differently.

Adult educators have given more attention than most to the significance of issues of individual and group learning. Reference has already been made to Brookfield's work on the nature of successful independent learning. Allen Tough had studied the adult learning iceberg – the 80 per cent of an adult's learning efforts which, in his view, consisted chiefly of self-planned learning and was ignored by professionals in the field. Brookfield (1983) noted that Tough's research (like that of other researchers) was biased towards the measurement of the quantity rather than the quality of learning, and concentrated on individual learner control at the expense of the role of learning networks and informal learning exchanges. Brookfield found in his study of 25 successful

independent learners that several factors emerged as being significant. One was the importance of parental or spouse encouragement – 12 of the sample cited this as the reason for beginning a learning project, and fathers were particularly influential here. Another was that the learners regarded their exploration of their fields of interest (which ranged from organic gardening and bridge to classical music and aero-modelling) as unending intellectual voyages, not restricted by conventional subject boundaries. A third was that the learners saw themselves as being part of a larger learning community with whom they shared knowledge and accumulated wisdom – for them, independence did not mean isolation. Casual oral transmission of knowledge was seen by them as of greater value than lectures, and they in turn provided specialist advice and mentoring to unskilled newcomers. Success was measured by peer recognition.

Brookfield's 'parallel universe' of independent learners – and the network of groups within which they develop – are clearly of great significance to museums. Indeed, Brookfield acknowledged that his research project itself was dependent for assistance upon 'the network of local contacts that all community educators must develop if their programmes are to be well grounded in the needs, circumstances and concerns of their local community.' What is true of the community education field should be equally true in principle for museums.

The benefits that museums would receive from closer contact with and understanding of the adult education sector are one side of the equation. But what have museums to offer in return? Principally, the resources and methodologies of learning from objects, inside and outside the museum walls. In this, museum staff have considerable practical experience, but (as was shown by the conference at the Whitworth Art Gallery discussed at the beginning of this chapter) they are rarely able to provide a coherent explanation of the nature of the process. In part, this is because research into the processes of learning – and museum education itself – has low status in most museums.

It is conventional, at least within museums, to separate the subject of learning (the collections and the disciplines they represent) from the process of learning. Museum research activities are conceived of as hierarchical and sequential. In this process, the main focus is on the collection, and the function of learning research (if it is considered at all) is to make the research discoveries

of the experts available to a non-specialist audience. However, as George Hein (1991) has pointed out, there is no such thing as knowledge 'out there', independent of the knower or community of learners. The separation and elevation of collections research from learning research is no longer sustainable, either theoretically or practically. Indeed, museum staff in general, and curators in particular, themselves often have many of the characteristics of successful independent learners described by Brookfield.

How can we identify the ways of knowing that are characteristic of curators and distinguish these from, for example, the ways of knowing used by design historians?

One potentially fruitful approach is that proposed by Donald Schon in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and his subsequent book *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987). The essence of Schon's analysis is:

> *a new epistemology of practice, one that would stand the question of professional knowledge on its head by taking as its point of departure the competence and industry already embedded in skilful practice – especially, the reflection-in-action (the 'thinking about what they are doing while they are doing it') that practitioners sometimes bring to situations of uncertainty, uniqueness and conflict.*

Schon contrasts this with the technical rationality which treats professional competence as the application of privileged knowledge to instrumental problems of practice. He proposes that university-based professional schools should learn from 'such deviant traditions of education for practice as studios of art and design, conservatories of music and dance, athletics coaching, and apprenticeship in the crafts, all of which emphasise coaching and learning by doing.' Schon does not deny the value of technical rationality, but he does point out that what he describes as 'indeterminate zones of practice' – activities characterised by uncertainty, uniqueness and value conflict – have come to be seen over the last two decades as central to professional practice. Yet they lie beyond conventional boundaries of professional competence (and are, one might add, certainly beyond the limited standards of competence identified by the functional analysis of professional museum work imposed by the then Department of Employment on the museum sector). Schon proposes that inherent in the practice of the professionals we recognise as unusually competent is a core of artistry,

which he describes as an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing; not mysterious, but rigorous in its own terms. Further support is given to this approach by the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) on situated learning, which examines in particular the operation of 'apprenticeships' across cultures in communities of practice.

Museum work is a classic example of the kind of professional practice described by Schon. But does it have wider relevance to the processes of adult learning in museums? The answer is yes – but this must be qualified. The process of learning from objects, galleries and museums is relevant to other adult learners in museums only in so far as museum staff and other adults – the museum users – are able to share the same learning processes and experiences. The reality is that, for a variety of reasons (some defensible), curators in particular have privileged access not just to the collections but to the other resources of the museum. Perhaps an understanding of curatorial ways of knowing would provide us with an insight into the way the adult public *could* learn in museums, if given the opportunity to do so. One curator of metalwork once told the author that she could immediately identify a piece made of silver plate from one of sterling or other types of silver, not by scientific calibration or even touch but by smell. No amount of academic training in design history would have given her that. Yet we often, as professionals, impose on visitors limitations on their own experience of museums that we would find intolerable if they were applied to us. The gap should be closed, and the more it is, the more relevant professional learning and adult visitor learning in museums will be to one another. Perhaps the learning processes of specialist educators, who work within museums but do not usually have all of the opportunities for learning from collections available to curators, will provide some middle ground.

In 1986, the Getty Center for Education in the Arts published *The Uncertain Profession: Observations on the state of museum education in twenty American art museums* by Elliot Eisner and Stephen Dobbs. This report, based on interviews with directors and educators at 20 art museums, came to the conclusion that (among other things) there was a lack of consensus among museum professionals regarding the basic aims of museum education; that museum education lacked a sufficient intellectual base and theoretical foundation, including that of scholarly models in the universities; that museum educators have little or no technical training in re-

search or evaluation methods relevant to their professional tasks; and that the relationship between museum education and other education services and institutions in the community had been inadequately conceptualised. Museum and gallery educators challenged the methodology of the study and some of Eisner and Dobbs' conclusions.[4] However, there was broad agreement that they were right to criticise the lack of theoretical foundation and training of museum educators. Many of these criticisms would apply with equal force in the UK; not least the lack of appropriate knowledge and skills among museum educators and other staff for work with adult learners.

If museum educators are to gain greater access to, and develop their links with, the adult education sector, then a number of quite fundamental changes will be needed. Firstly, museum educators and all other staff directly responsible for adult learning in museums – which probably means most professional staff – need to obtain training in the varied needs and different learning styles of adults. The current internal neglect by most institutions of appropriate staff training in basic educational theory and practice is a telling metaphor for their external neglect of appropriate public adult education services in museums. The current MTI standards and qualifications include a limited amount of relevant training, but staff also need to be aware of other models of professional education, including that of Schon's reflective practitioner, that may supply those dimensions which the MTI's functional analysis methodology and narrow emphasis on the collections have missed. If it is accepted that non-specialist educators as well as specialists have an important contribution to make to the education of adults (and other visitors) in museums, then the corollary is that they must take that responsibility seriously and ensure that they carry it out in a professional manner, and be trained to do so.

Secondly, museums themselves must become learning organisations – places where staff are encouraged to collaborate with and learn from one another. This means that the current unproductive conflict between specialist curators, marketing staff, educators, discipline-based academics and others should be replaced by a determination on their part to try to develop a common set of objectives which include adult learning, and then to evaluate and improve the quality of each project in the light of these objectives. Is it possible to build bridges intramurally? These conflicts have deep philosophical roots and it is ultimately only possible to re-

solve them at a theoretical level. This author's view is that the unifying theory or theories that are required must ultimately be based on the process of learning from objects. Here work on adult learning developed by the adult education sector has much to contribute; some initial approaches to this problem have been suggested above. If these internal developments do not take place, if museums themselves do not become learning organisations, it will be hard for them to become organisations *for* learning.

Thirdly, more opportunities are needed for exchange of information about good practice. In this, the national organisations responsible for adult learning and museums – in particular NIACE, the Museums Association, the Museums and Galleries Commission, the National Association for Gallery Education and the Group for Education in Museums – have a special responsibility. The agenda and programme for research into adult learning in museums is one area where collaboration would be extremely beneficial. Another is the basic but important process of making the staff in each sector – museum staff and adult educators – aware of each other; the reality at present is that most adult educators have little contact with museum educators and vice versa, and neither side has much understanding of the nature of the other's field.

A vital, but neglected group in this bridge-building process are those who work in the penumbra around museums – adult educators who work with museums, and museum staff who are already contributing to adult education and are engaged in its issues. These individuals are few in number. They are also, literally, marginal, but it is often on the margins that the most creative work occurs. Such people are often classic successful self-directed learners – gregarious, skilled at networking, generous in exchanging information with others interested in the issues which engage them, and concerned to make the links between their own learning and their lives. The contribution of these 'marginals' is indispensable, and new ways need to be found to engage them and use their contributions.

One issue – a very fundamental one – has been left until last. It is the issue of purpose. What kind of society are we working towards? Most museums regard their visitors as vessels into which information can be poured. An acknowledgement of variations in existing levels of knowledge and different learning styles may lead museum professionals to use different models of communication, but the learning process is still understood to be one-way and with-

out a wider social purpose. Most adult educators, however, have been trained to regard their communities as a resource – perhaps the most important resource – in the learning process. Unless and until this philosophical conflict of purpose can be resolved, collaboration between museums and the adult education sector will achieve little. Is there room for Queen Mab's chariot among the steam engines?

## *Notes*

1. Unpublished results of a questionnaire sent to museums throughout the UK, conducted by Dr Stuart Davies of the Department of Management Studies at the University of Leeds on behalf of the National Report on Museum Education. The project is managed by the author of this chapter.
2. See, for example, Graeme Chalmers (1993) 'Who is to do this Great Work for Canada? South Kensington in Ontario' in the *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 12(2), 161–78, and the chapter on 'America Imports Cole's System', in Stuart Macdonald (1970) *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, University of London Press, 253–62.
3. Based on observations made by the author during a visit to Bangladesh in 1993.
4. See, for example, 'The uncertain profession: perceptions and directions' in Museum Education Roundtable (1993) *Patterns in Practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education*, Washington, DC: Museum Education Roundtable, 48–59.

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CHAPTER 2

# An Adult Educator's Perspective

*Lalage Bown*

## Starting Point: Why Should Adult Educators Use Museums?

Museums in the UK form a rich resource for adults learning independently or under the guidance of museum educators and of other adult educators:

> *The United Kingdom has some of the best museums in the world. There are over 2000 and they range in size from the British Museum with a budget of £40m, 1000 staff and almost 6 million visitors to a one-room display run by volunteers and open on a few afternoons each summer ... our museums and galleries are a national asset (Museums and Galleries Commission, 1994).*

They comprise an asset for adult education which many countries would envy and this part of the chapter is about ways of capitalising on that asset.

Some adult educators might, however, be surprised or sceptical at this viewpoint. It therefore seems worth asking at the outset: why should adult learners and adult educators use museums?

Some doubts may crystallise round a perception that museums are out-of-date Victorian dustbins. This can be true of a few museums, and certainly small, poorly-resourced museums may not have the resources for modern display. But I would argue that they may still have a community education role, as their collections probably have a closeness to local people who have added to them and cared for them (Bown, 1987). In most cases today, moreover, museum curators are professionally concerned to ensure current relevance.

Secondly, doubts may exist over the limited range of subject-matter for adult learning which museum collections may support. Such doubts arise from lack of awareness of what is available and later I discuss the very wide curricular possibilities open to adult education in museums. At this point, it should be recalled that major museums in Britain's cities and university towns cover a great range of disciplines – geology, archaeology, biology, environmental studies, industrial development, sociology, astronomy, as well as the more obvious history and fine and applied arts – and that there are specialist museums for almost every subject that can be thought of: cinema in Bradford; textiles in Nottingham and Manchester, with the woollen museum of the National Museum of Wales at Dre-Fach Felindre; flight at East Fortune near Edinburgh; musical instruments at Brentford; witchcraft at Boscastle; religions at Glasgow.

Thirdly, adult educators may feel that the very idea of a set of fixed exhibits, representing a particular interpretation, is contrary to the fundamental educational purpose of encouraging adult learners to develop their own interpretations. It is true that some curators do try to impose their own perception, and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1987) points out some examples. But most professional curators are aware that their collections should be presented to stir imaginations, not suppress them. They are often dealing with subject-matter which may be contentious, so that they have to be sensitive in their presentation. Examples of this sensitivity are the Ulster Folk Museum, celebrating the inheritance of two traditions whose protagonists have often been in conflict, and the visitor centre at Culloden, where descendants come of those who fought and died on both sides.

A last reservation which an adult educator could have might be the reverse of the argument of out-datedness. Some museums and galleries might look too glitzy to be taken seriously, and through the demands of heritage tourism they might be seen to cheapen and distort. This is perhaps the most real fear of those which I have mentioned, but I would suggest that adult citizens committed to serious learning form a constituency to prevent that continuing. A leading museum authority has, to their comfort, said: 'The fashionable excesses of the so-called Heritage Industry have been giving way to a reassertion of the principal responsibilities of museum work. Museums should seek to create interest through

knowledge and understanding, not hype; excitement and involvement, not passive consumerism' (Ambrose, 1994).

Museums are ours to use. Historically, they evolved in the main from an *educational impulse*, whether they were set up by the literary and philosophical societies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by the Mechanics' Institutes and improvement societies of late Georgian and Victorian times, or by universities for their own teaching (Miles, 1986; Kelly, 1992). At the present day, it is said:

> *Museums are involved with far more than a caretaker role of collecting and looking after objects. The reason they collect and preserve is that their core function alongside preservation is education. Museums use objects to tell their story, to contribute to human knowledge, and to provide the essential resource for object-based research and scholarship. They enhance curriculum-led education and provide the opportunity for lifelong learning. Indeed it is on the basis of their educational role that most museums in England and Wales are granted charitable status (in Scotland and Northern Ireland the legal arrangements are slightly different). The use of collections for scholarship and research should underpin every aspect of museum activity* (Museums and Galleries Commission, 1994).

Museums, then, constitute an apt resource for adult learning, since they are essentially educational in nature. Moreover, museums are defined as being 'for the public benefit' (standard Museums Association definition) and very many are supported wholly or partly with public funds, so that they make up a resource which it is the adult public's right to use.

## Museums as a Resource for Adult Learners

In the past, museums were often associated with libraries, and like libraries they may be used by individual learners at will, for independent learning, with a structured plan, or as a basis for incidental (unplanned) learning. Unlike libraries, they may be used by *groups* of learners working together in accordance with a learning plan designed by themselves or agreed with a tutor. From the adult educator's perspective, it is vital to remember that adults have far greater opportunities in a museum to learn *independently* than in a classroom. So long as entry to a museum is free of charge (in the United

Kingdom, this is fortunately still the case for the majority of national and civic museums), an individual, or a pair of friends, or a family or a group can visit and revisit to study a particular object or picture at times suitable to them and for their own purposes.

Providers of open learning courses and tutors in adult classes would do well to bear in mind the possibilities for adult learners which are offered by museums, and to steer them to take up such opportunities.

Because museums offer the sight (and sometimes the handling) of original physical objects they have an immediacy which no other learning source can offer. Books, radio, television are all, in a sense, secondhand. A museum offers everything at first hand. No other medium can have the direct impact of say, the mummified cat in the Egyptian gallery at the British Museum or the superb 5,000-year-old Chinese ceramics in the Burrell collection in Glasgow, or the opportunity of clambering up into the driver's cab of a monster steam locomotive in one of the transport museums. Where the handling of objects is encouraged, as it often is in modern museums, there is obviously an additional excitement.

The fact that learning is from objects means that museum collections may be used by people who do not have access to the written word, either because they have missed out on literacy altogether, or because they have a different language or different script. Museums, in such cases, provide a possible alternative to literacy – communication through artefacts rather than writing.

One may go into a museum, or into two or three museums, and simply browse. The result may be a quite unexpected discovery or a deepening of understanding about a particular topic. A visit to the Museum of Labour History in Manchester led me, for instance, to the quite unexpected discovery of the difficulties faced in unionisation by professional footballers. Everyone has heard about the struggles of the miners and the dockworkers but to me the footballers' story was a complete surprise. Visiting the Ironbridge Gorge series of museums must deepen any visitor's understanding of the Industrial Revolution, however casually one goes there, perhaps with no other motive than a day out.

Many museums do their best to provide basic guidance of use to the individual learner, starting with a plan of the galleries and clear labelling of the displays. Often they provide additional wall panels of written information, handboards which one can carry around, interactive displays, cassette-players with recorded de-

scriptions and explanations. Further, they will have booklets to foster additional learning after visitors have left, as well as audio- and video-cassettes. In such ways, museums are fulfilling their educational mission. For an adult educator encouraging individual learning, all these support materials can be enlisted and the individual given hints on how to use them for her or his own purposes.

The word 'purpose' implies an element of planning – a learning goal – and alongside incidental, informal learning, perhaps springing from it, is a *programme* of learning. Earlier, it was noted that those parts of a museum collection put on show are arranged according to someone's scheme of interpretation. It was also said that these schemes are usually aimed to excite the imagination of viewers, but it is always a good response for a learner to arrive at her/his own interpretation. Some curators can offer a real challenge to learners to take control of the meaning of displays. There is at least one museum where objects are simply displayed according to letters of the alphabet. In the 'C' case, for instance, one might find a clay pipe, a creel, a cake tin, the city coat-of-arms and a cotton smock. The first impression is of an unrelated jumble; the second is of the complex textures of daily life in the recent past; and the third is to trace connections and make one's own conclusions. Those connections will of course come more quickly if one already has a set of questions to ask.

What has been said of the museum as a learning resource for individuals also applies to groups. Several members of a group – a family, a women's organisation, an art appreciation society, a conference of engineers, a co-operative – can enlist the museum collections for learning through a casual visit or as part of a group strategy to increase their knowledge.

All this seeks to emphasise the many possibilities of a museum for engendering independent learning, for encouraging enquiry and analysis and thus for *empowering* people, alone or in a group. Adult educators' own role may often be simply to provide guidance, to help people to become familiar with and to 'read' museums.

There is, however, another perspective: the direct use of museums by adult educators in support of their teaching.

## Museums as an Adult Education Resource

What sort of a teaching resource can a museum constitute? Museums are the best treasury available of physical objects to provide illumination to teaching in a whole range of subjects, and that illumination, in a modern museum, will have the added advantage of being enjoyable and entertaining.

Collections can be used for a wide range of disciplines. For subjects such as *geology and archaeology*, generalist museums will have collections which provide samples of most phenomena: rocks of different ages and stages; fossils indicating the development of plants and animals; human tools at different stages of technology and using materials available in different environments. Such collections provide a more vivid picture than a text-book and give learners a broad framework within which to fit any finds they make on field visits.

In the same way, generalist collections of fish, birds and mammals provide an understanding of *evolution and classification*. In many modern museums, they will be presented in a way which enhances understanding of their environment and of environmental issues. With *other sciences*, lay people can often understand them better through an appreciation of the development of ideas. A teacher of science to adults will find it extremely useful to trace this development through a collection such as that in the Oxford History of Science Museum, while a vivid and detailed knowledge of the evolving principles of motor transport can be gained from a collection such as that in the Glasgow Museum of Transport, starting with an almost pram-like 1897 Daimler-Benz and going on nearly year by year to a modern, state-of-the-art vehicle.

The possibilities in museum collections for supporting and developing *history* curricula are very wide. Artefacts in most generalist museums will be available to illustrate domestic and working life, encouraging reflection on distinctions between town and country, between different trades and professions, between different social classes. There may be material to illustrate *design and taste* at different times; the Victoria and Albert Museum is the supreme example of collections which can be used for such purposes, but museums throughout the United Kingdom were founded in Victorian times with similar principles and all have relevant objects on display and in store.

*Economic history* can be illuminated when museum objects are used to provoke questions. For an example, the University of Glasgow inherited, in its Hunterian Museum, a famous collection of coins. In the past, these might have been displayed in neat rows, admired for their looks or (by the specially knowledgeable) for their rarity value and then passed by. Now, they are displayed in groups to enable a visitor to make connections between those coins and people's lives at the time. For instance, 30 silver coins of first century Roman Judaea are shown and this sum, the price paid to Judas Iscariot, is related to what he could have bought with the money, to the cost of food, clothing and other goods at the time. Such a coin exhibit can help to illuminate scales of value in different periods or prompt questions about inflationary trends for learners to follow up. Coins and medals are often useful evidence for *political history* as well, with evidence about actual state power, political claims in their inscriptions and events considered important. The Hunterian, for instance, has a chronological display of gold coins showing all the Roman emperors.

Mention of design, from a historical viewpoint, is a reminder of the time-honoured use of textiles, crafts, sculpture and painting collections to study *aesthetics* and provide inspiration for new *design*. Any adult class in, say, wood carving, jewellery-making or painting would gain from the study of examples in their local museum or gallery and any class in art appreciation would benefit from encounters with real ceramics, sculptures or paintings, moving around and viewing them from various angles, taking their own time to engage with them and appraise them. A visit to such collections makes a welcome break from sitting in the dark looking at slides which has, inevitably, been one of the staples of art appreciation classes for adults.

So far, I have given examples of curricular support in museums for mainstream disciplines in *sciences* and *humanities*. Additionally, I should like to discuss one other mainstream subject and one which does not at present feature in more than a few adult curricula.

The mainstream subject is *literature*. Dealing as it does with words, can it be taught in association with objects? I would not like to overstate my claim, but I can think of circumstances and types of course which might find museums a resource. Study of a particular author might be enhanced by a visit to a place dedicated to her or him – say to Jane Austen's house at Chawton, Bernard

Shaw's house at Ayot St Lawrence, Robert Burns' cottage at Alloway. This may only be possible if it does not involve a long journey, but any literary study of past authors which involves a study of context can be helped by historical material about the relevant period available nearer at hand. Additionally, it is not far-fetched, in a time of such rapid change as our own, to suggest that a museum's objects may supply meaning to what could otherwise be mere poetic sounds, since our vocabulary is so different from that of our predecessors. How many urban readers of Thomas Hardy's 'Only an old man harrowing clods' have ever seen a harrow? And many colloquial metaphors might be freshened by recourse to the actual objects, such as: having another string to one's bow; taking the gilt off the gingerbread.

A less familiar subject but one very apposite in today's Britain is *ethnography*. Social anthropology and sociology courses often deal with multicultural themes, but the tutors may not always be aware of the rich ethnographic material in museum collections. Often it is in store, because of a feeling of post-imperial guilt, but objects should be brought out to celebrate the diverse cultures represented in the United Kingdom today, as well as to encourage greater mutual understanding. The Scottish Museums Council did a recent survey to catalogue ethnographic resources in Scotland's museums and it emerged that in Scotland alone there are over 40,000 ethnographic items (Scottish Museums Council, 1994).

This all goes to make a case for museums as resources for curricula across a variety of disciplines. Reference to objects, collections of objects or displays of objects can also help an adult educator in any discipline to forward some of the underlying purposes of adult education. The study and appraisal of objects and collections, for whatever curriculum, can help to develop learners' critical skills through learning of the strength and weaknesses of material evidence, as well as the possibilities for alternative categorisation and interpretation. Such adult learners may also gain a better understanding of the importance of *context*.

To use such resources of course depends on an awareness of their availability. The best way to find out about any local museum is to visit it, look at its displays and consult its staff. They can provide information about any plans for special exhibitions, and it may be possible to structure courses around particular exhibitions. Most importantly, they can provide information about what they have in store or in research collections, since any large museum

displays only a selection of items at any one time. For a serious educational purpose, curators will usually be willing to allow a group to see (and perhaps handle) objects not on general display.

What about other museums and specialist collections? Again, local museum staff can probably provide advice and they can certainly put an enquirer in touch with the Area Museums Council. Most AMC's will have information about the collections in their geographical area and they may have produced surveys of material in some subject areas, such as the Scottish Museums Council's ethnographic survey already referred to. Additionally, any adult educator within reasonable distance of a university would do well to find out about any collections which it has. Universities established for any length of time usually have general museums and very often a number of specialist collections, sometimes well-known and listed in tourist guides, but often known and used almost entirely by the department which has set it up.

## The Use of Museums by Adult Educators

Having established that museums are a resource for adult learning and a resource for structured adult education, and that it is possible for adult educators to work out their availability in a given geographical area, in what ways can adult educators make use of them?

Any recourse to museums, beyond mere advice to adult students to visit, should be in full partnership with museum staff. They are the experts on their own collections and with their help an adult group can see far more than the general public (research collections can be particularly exciting for a class to visit). Ideally, the adult educator would hope to find someone in the museum with an adult education remit. In reality, this is not very often the case, since many museums do not have a full-time education officer even for school work. A recent Scottish survey showed that only just over half of Scotland's museums had a physical space suitable for educational activities, less than half had an educational policy, only 13 per cent had a part-time or seconded education worker and only 3 per cent had their own full-time education staff. These were all staff specifically for educational work with *schools* (SMC, 1993).

In such circumstances, the adult educator has a real contribution to make to the partnership. Because of the minimal experience

of adult education by many museum professionals, it helps them to be reminded that, however important school education is, there are other whole areas of lifelong learning where museums could be valuable as well and that, as David Jones points out in Chapter 4, they may need to be approached in a different way from that appropriate to the formal school sector. At its most basic, the difference is that 'Adults have to be attracted to museums, they cannot be commanded there like children' (Zetterberg, 1969). In my experience, many curators are conscious both of a broader educational mission and of the importance of serving their communities. Adult education linked to the museum can help them to enhance these roles.

There are what might be called minimalist uses of museums in adult education. A class tutor (or an open learning text) might make reference to an individual object or cluster of objects and advise learners to visit the relevant museum simply in illustration of a particular point. A course in village history in the Thames Valley could include advice to look at a particular exhibit or a single item in the Reading Museum of Rural Life (its collections are England-wide in coverage, but the Thames Valley is mentioned since the museum would be relatively easily accessible to any adult learners living in that area). The course is not in association with the museum, but the museum is mentioned in the same way as a book might be mentioned, for reference.

Coming closer to the museum, museum staff might be invited to visit a class or group to discuss a particular topic and bring illustrative material. Alternatively a course could be held on an adjacent museum's premises, with some reference to the collections and perhaps some input from museum staff. All are ways of raising learners' awareness of the potential value and interest of museums and of fostering a linkage between museums and the world of adult education.

More substantive uses of museums might involve the inclusion of a visit or visits to a particular museum or museums as an integral part of a course. A women's studies programme on women and political awareness, for instance, could include a visit to the Pankhurst Centre in Manchester or the women's suffrage collection at the Glasgow People's Palace (again, depending on geographical base). Such a visit could include lectures/discussion with curatorial staff. Apart from the direct learning benefits, there are also the affective ones – the break in class routine and the social

nature of the excursion. (An issue to be taken account of in this connection is of course the limits imposed on such visits by the costs in terms of time and money.)

In all these examples, the museum is an *adjunct*, however important and integral to the learning programme. Other types of activity use the museum as the *centre* of the programme. Courses or lecture-series may be structured round an exhibition, a gallery, a collection, or even a single object. The curriculum or project may lead to very specific ways of using the museum. For instance, educators have become aware of the potential of museums for oral history. Objects can provide 'prompts' for learners' dormant memory and knowledge. The Museum of the Moving Image in London has pioneered work with older people to compile various oral histories and some of the armed services' museums are moving in this direction, notably the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth.

Some adult educators working in collaboration with museums have developed other types of learning activity, making museums the heart of their project in other ways. Various kinds of *performance* have been undertaken – dance, concerts, plays by adult learners – all within the museum setting and relevant to it. Museums themselves often have 'interpreters' for educational purposes in period dress, but an adult drama group can take this idea forward with a series of interpretative sketches, or a continuing semi-improvisation through such a device as a country fair in a rural life gallery or a miniature Miners' Gala in an industrial one. At one time, a seventeenth century exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery was combined with a performance of this kind – a contemporary London street was brought in, with gallants dressed like Van Dyck subjects, washerwomen, beggar-children and hawkers of all kinds. It brought extra life and reinforcement to the exhibition and must have increased the knowledge and understanding of the learners who took part. Such a project requires research into language and social relationships, as well as into dress and utensils.

Beyond all this, current theories of adult education as liberating and empowering have led to new modes of working, in which the aim is both to help learners to 'take charge' of their museums and also to take the museums themselves into the learners' communities.

A most imaginative programme in which learners are encouraged to become 'owners' of the museum is the Victoria and Albert Museum's tent project (see Chapter 5.3). The centre-piece is the

design for a new gallery of a huge South Asian tent. Museums around the country have been enlisted to tap into local expertise available in members of the community whose origins were in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. In the City of Birmingham museums, a group of women has been working with a specially assigned member of the museum service to design and work one panel of the tent. Half-forgotten skills of embroidery have been revived and taught by the older women to the younger, designs have been planned and new skills of drawing and layout have been learned. A beautiful piece of work is being produced, but, more importantly, these women begin to value themselves and their cultural identity anew, have gained in knowledge of numeracy through measurement, of language and of pattern-making; and coming from several different areas of the sub-continent, they have forged new social links. On top of all this, they have a sense of both belonging to and owning the Birmingham museum where they have been working for many months and also a sense of participation in the Victoria and Albert Museum itself, which they have visited and had demystified for them. It is possible to think of more modest programmes which would have the same sort of effect, and elsewhere in this book (see Chapter 5) other examples are given.

What of taking the museums into learners' own communities? There are a number of experiments in making museums more accessible in this way, for instance the Open Museum project (Chapter 5.9). A more radical open museum scheme operates in Glasgow through an alliance between the city's museums and the community education service. Community groups choose objects of interest to them, take them to their own community centre and make their own display. For reasons of security, this cannot be done with priceless treasures, but there are many museum items which are in duplicate or are replaceable.

Taking objects and small exhibitions into the community may help to make the museum more accessible to adult learners who find it hard to travel. For adult education groups who are geographically very far away, there are other ways of gaining access to some of the material through posters, slides, publications. But as has been said already, these lack the immediacy of the actual objects. There are now, however, new technological developments which in part overcome this problem. There are computer programmes which give images of objects that can be manipulated to show all sides and angles. The viewer can look at a ceramic jar

from all sides, upside-down and inside as well. A pioneer in this kind of programme has been the National Museums of Scotland, which in preparation for the new Museum of Scotland has produced a programme called MOSAICS showing many of the important artefacts which will be displayed in it. Hazel Moffat describes this in greater detail in her contribution to the present volume (see Chapter 7).

## Themes for Museum-Linked Adult Education

From the adult educator's perspective it can be seen that there are multifarious uses to which a museum's resources may be put. Some of those just mentioned take us beyond conventional curricular disciplines.

A great strength of museums as a learning resource is the opening they offer for the study of *themes*, appropriate to those forms of adult education which are problem- or issue-based.

Themes relating to *identity* come to mind: occupational identity (as in exhibits or museums devoted to a given occupation or profession: weavers, miners, farmers, social workers); class identity (as approached by the Museum of Labour History); cultural identity (as exemplified in the V&A tent project); national identity (as proposed for the new Museum of Scotland).

Discussion of identity and its layers of meaning may well be linked to ideas on the nature of *heritage*. This has become a 'warm fuzzy' word, vague and generally thought to be appealing, but looking at a museum display of, say, ships' fittings made on the Tyne or the Clyde and used on ships whose owners were in San Francisco, or of china made in Beijing for the British market suggests that the notion is altogether more complicated.

Thirdly, the museum is about *conservation* of the objects in its care – not letting them rot away but keeping them in good condition – and this leads on to other considerations about conservation of the buildings in which they are housed and of the environment itself.

These are just some of the many issues that can be thrown up through the museum experience for adult learners.

## Value to Museums of the Adult Education Link

This survey is of ways in which adult learners, adult educators and adult education programmes can benefit from museums. It seems fitting to end by emphasising that the benefit is not one-way. We have already noted that museum professionals might learn from the methods and techniques of adult education. Additionally, museums must gain from the widening of their audiences (providing a greater catchment for museum 'friends' or other support groups) and from the increased numbers of adult citizens who have an insight into the value and operation (and needs) of museums. This should give them a more powerful constituency in times of government policy change, grant restriction and so on. Adult education groups can also be enlisted by museums to provide relevant expert knowledge or contextual information, as the examples of the tent project and oral history work have shown.

Speaking personally, I have been grateful for the help and support I have had from museums, as both an adult learner and adult educator over more than 45 years; and I hope that the explorations of my students and myself have not been without value to those museums.

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CHAPTER 3

# A Museum Educator's Perspective

*Eilean Hooper-Greenhill*

Most museums and galleries in Britain today are involved in some aspect of adult education. The range of provision is extensive, varying from short one-off 'drop-in' sessions for families to year-long accredited courses for serious students. Audiences are varied and include community groups, teachers, and students, societies and clubs, day-centre users, patients in hospitals and prison inmates. Each museum has developed a unique approach which has grown out of their own particular identity, context, and institutional history.

Museums can justifiably be regarded as institutions of life-long learning. Learning which is lifelong begins before school and continues until death: it is cradle-to-grave. It is stimulated by the needs of the learner; it is not limited to that which happens within educational institutions such as schools and colleges, but takes place on a much broader front, including learning through experience, through people and through places. Museums and galleries are very appropriate places for life-long learning. Very young children enjoy looking at paintings, and handling and sorting pottery sherds or other objects. Elderly people can be moved to remember their own youth with appropriate artefacts. Researchers may use the archives to answer their own research questions, or to locate information about their family or their home in the past. Individuals of all ages can find something of relevance in the exhibitions and displays. Lifelong learning is an excellent function for a museum, and museums that do not expect to be used for lifelong learning are sterile places indeed.

'Adult education', as the term is being used here, has a different focus. It refers to all those varied taught sessions, leisure activi-

ties and learning partnerships that are organised by museum staff to enable any adult to enjoy the museum experience and comprises formal and non-formal provision inside the museum and in various locations in the community. Although one of the functions of exhibitions and displays in museums is to encourage learning, the discussion in this chapter will be limited to activities that are organised to complement permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions. Adult education here is understood as part of the lifelong learning function of museums and galleries, but it is not synonymous with it.

## A Historically Important Function

Museums have been seen as spaces with the power to educate adults for at least the last 150 years. The First Report of the Department of Practical Art (the first governing body of what we now know as the Victoria and Albert Museum) stated this very clearly in the 1850s:

> *Indeed, a Museum presents probably the only effectual means of educating the adult, who cannot be expected to go to school like the youth,and the necessity for teaching the grown man is quite as great as that of training the child. By proper arrangements a Museum may be made in the highest degree instructional. If it be connected with lectures, and means are taken to point out its uses and applications, it becomes elevated from being a mere unintelligible lounge for idlers into an impressive school room for everyone (Minihan, 1977:12).*

The museum complex that developed during the second half of the nineteenth century at South Kensington was in large part an educational matrix, with the arts and sciences laid out for learning for a national public.

Other museums had more local ambitions. The Ancoats Museum (also known as the Horsfall Museum) in Manchester, the Ruskin Museum at Walkley, near Sheffield, the Whitechapel Art Gallery in the East End of London and the South London Art Gallery are all examples of museums and galleries set up with a specific educational purpose in the poorer parts of large cities in the late nineteenth century (Waterfield, 1994:31). At the Ancoats Museum in Manchester in the 1880s, for example, classes were related to displays; thus workshops in woodwork were advertised in the

rooms displaying furniture. Lantern lectures and classes in clay-modelling and drawing were available (Chadwick, 1983:60). At the Whitechapel Art Gallery guides gave gallery talks to the visitors (Borzello, 1987:120).

This clear view of the educational use of museums and galleries was to falter after the First World War (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991:33–45). However, adult education remained part of the accepted functions of museums, and as museums and galleries have reinvented themselves during the last 15 years, this has been one of the areas where a great deal of exciting work has been carried out.

This chapter describes adult education in museums and galleries across Britain in the mid-1990s.[1] An encouraging picture emerges of creative, imaginative and immensely varied activities, carried out with the support of a huge range of partnerships. However, although the actual provision is on the whole very positive, serious questions emerge about the funding and management of adult education within museum management structures. The future development of adult education in museums, although capable of being clearly articulated by practitioners, depends on management vision and commitment, and the favourable resolution of difficult decisions about resource allocations.

## Provision in the 1990s

It is not easy to give a general picture of the provision of adult education in museums and galleries across Britain. There are many complicating factors that mean that each museum's approach is unique. Museums in themselves are enormously varied in size, in range of collection, in governance and in philosophy. Museums include those archetypical institutions, the British Museum, with its six million visitors per year, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, with its seven miles of roof. At the other end of the scale are the Grange Museum in Brent, which is to be found in the middle of a roundabout in the busy suburbs of London, and the Dean Heritage Museum, which is a converted mill in the middle of the Forest of Dean, one of the most beautiful parts of the British countryside. Large national museums might have many hundreds of members of staff, all with very specific specialist expertise, while small independent or local authority museums might be staffed by one person, who acts as curator, educator and caretaker simultaneously.

In addition to these variables, the philosophy of the museum's

managers and governors will determine the resources made available to any specific area of work. In all museums today, resources are scarce and priorities must be defined from among the competing claims of collection, curation, conservation, building management, employment of staff, publication, display development and education. Once educational resources have been identified, there are many different approaches to be reconciled. Should the focus be on schools, under-fives, outreach work, teachers' courses or adult education? Should we teach ourselves or employ others to do this? What charging policy should be adopted? Each museum must answer these and many more questions before a specific approach to adult education can be developed.

A range of answers to these questions has emerged. Some large museum services, such as the National Museums on Merseyside, consist of several museums, each of which has its own approach to the delivery of adult education. In some museums, while the education department might be providing adult education for some groups, curators in other departments might be responding to requests for talks or courses, which the curators organise themselves. In both these cases, it is difficult to see a complete picture of provision. In Glasgow, the local city museums form one coherent service, run by the city authorities. One department of the museum is the Open Museum, which works exclusively in relation to outreach into the community, much of which is concerned with adult education, through organising exhibitions, loans of objects and a range of activities. The museums' education department is currently run by Strathclyde Regional Education Authority, although it is based in the various city museums. The education department is also active in providing services for adults. In these complex situations, provision for adults is spread across many areas of activity, involves many members of museum staff, and is dependent on a great deal of networking with other groups and organisations.

In smaller and less complex institutions, it is still likely that many of the museum staff will be involved in adult education, but often in a reactive rather than a proactive way. When asked to work with a group, perhaps to give a talk, or to contribute to a course, generally the response will be positive. However, little may be done to initiate an active approach to work with adults. In very small museums, with perhaps two or three professional staff, adult education will be one of the many tasks undertaken, and decisions

will have to be made in relation to competing calls on limited time and resources.

## An Active Approach

Many museums and galleries are actively engaged in adult education. This is mainly provided within the museum, but not infrequently takes place in the community. The range of provision is broad, including lectures, demonstrations, tours, study days, evening classes, community projects, film programmes, workshops, short and long courses and conferences. Most museums offer a variety of activities to suit a wide spectrum of audiences. For example, weekend activities are offered at the Ulster Museum in Belfast. These are related to the permanent displays, or to temporary exhibitions. During October, November and December 1994, the activities were for both children and adults: with five talks on football, two Hallowe'en mask-making workshops, a talk on bats, a poetry reading, two art workshops, and four activities on the theme of Christmas – two concerts and two practical Christmas decoration-making workshops. This informal mix was complemented on Wednesdays by a series of 10 art films, using videos that had been made to accompany special exhibitions at the National Gallery in London, and by four lectures by media personalities.

A very frequent approach to adult education is a series of lectures or events to accompany a new exhibition. To accompany the exhibition *Treasure Islands – Robert Louis Stevenson* at the Royal Museum of Scotland, talks and films explored the writer's travels, his environment and friends in Hawaii and Samoa, the house that Stevenson built in Samoa which is about to become a museum, navigation in the South Seas, and the collection and display of artefacts from the South Seas in the nineteenth century and today. Museum guides gave 10-minute readings from Stevenson's work each weekend. These programmes were free. In addition, a book, a cassette and a teachers' pack were available for sale.

Some provision is more formal and designed for people who wish to develop a specific interest. At the Viewpoint Photography Gallery (Salford Museums and Art Gallery), courses are organised to introduce newcomers to darkroom skills, which can be extended through an intermediate workshop. The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich has devised an impressive range of courses in

conjunction with Goldsmiths College, University of London. *Introduction to Museum Studies* runs for eight weeks and covers the care of collections, conservation, education and interpretation, marketing and tourism, and evaluation. *Safety Issues at Sea* looks at the challenge of making today's ships safer, with talks on safety management, survival and firefighting. Experts from the various fields are invited to teach, and courses may be treated as leisure courses, or as part of an access qualification (see also Chapter 5.9).

Some museums have developed courses that offer specific qualifications. The National Gallery has developed a certificated course jointly with Birkbeck College, University of London, entitled *The History of Art and the Classroom*. This is for primary and secondary school teachers who wish to develop their knowledge of art history. The course runs for three terms, with 14 evening sessions at both the university and the gallery in two terms and the writing of a dissertation in the third term.

At the Horniman Museum and Gardens, where the museum is surrounded by a large park, it is possible to study *Trees and Shrubs*, as a module within the City & Guilds Certificate in Gardening course. This runs for a day per week for one year, and is jointly managed with Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Study days are designed to examine specific topics in depth. The Walker Art Gallery (National Museums on Merseyside) in conjunction with the University of Liverpool offered two days on art historical themes in February 1995, one on nineteenth century art dealers, and the other on 1890s black and white book illustration. Tutors for the first course were drawn from present-day auction houses and art dealers.

Some courses are more practical. These are relatively new as a form of museum provision, but are generally extremely popular. Ulster Folk and Transport Museum organises five-week craft courses on, for example, spinning, lace-making, tapestry-weaving, knitting, patchwork, mountmellick and sprigging. The Victoria and Albert Museum organises a range of drawing and painting courses based in the museum's galleries, which run for six weeks. These include courses on drawing and expression, japanning and lacquerwork, design, and botanical drawing and painting. This last course complemented an exhibition *Picturing Plants*, and combined study in the exhibition, drawings of plant structures and flower forms at Kew Gardens, visits to the Print Room at the V&A to study original botanical art, and use of the V&A Studio to produce personal

work.

Not all work is carried out in the museum or gallery. Some work is deliberately aimed at people who are either unable to visit the museum, or very unlikely to do so without some specific encouragement. The Victoria and Albert Museum has employed members of staff with knowledge and experience of particular community groups, and time is spent with these groups both inside and outside the museum. At the Tate Gallery Liverpool, part of the long-term strategic plan for education involves work with inmates from Park Lane Secure Hospital where the Outreach Officer from the gallery worked alongside artists on a programme designed to develop the patients' awareness of twentieth century art (Jackson, 1989). Workshops are organised in community venues, where people unfamiliar with contemporary art can meet Tate staff, experiment with new media, and later visit the gallery to relate the work on display there to the work they themselves have produced. Much adult education is used as a strategy to broaden the audience for museums and galleries.

Many individuals take advantage of adult education in museums, but those who most often use museums in this way are teachers, members of societies and students. Less frequently catered for, particularly in local authority museums, are tourists and scholars. It is also generally true that unless special efforts are made through networking and targeting, as is the case at the Tate Gallery Liverpool, lectures and events that are apparently open to all will mainly attract an older, white, middle-class audience.

Teachers' courses are common in museums and galleries. Even those museums who would not define themselves as involved in adult education are likely to be running courses for teachers as part of their schools service. Many museums provide far less face-to-face teaching than formerly, and rely instead on training teachers to organise and teach their own groups on visits. Training takes place on special study days, sometimes held on Saturdays, on two-hour 'twilight' courses during the week, and on day-long INSET courses, often working with one specific school and its entire staff on a specially designated training day.

Many museums produce detailed and informative packs for teachers. The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea, for example, published an excellent pack to accompany their exhibition on Gustave Doré, which looked in detail at studio working practices in nineteenth century France, and analysed seven of the works in the



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exhibition.

The National Curriculum in England and Wales has insisted that primary teachers include science in their curriculum planning. Many primary teachers have felt anxious about this and have welcomed training courses such as *Soils and Rocks: Weathering and erosion*, on offer by the Curator of the Dean Heritage Centre on a Saturday morning in April. The Curator also offered *Materials of the Industrial Revolution* for primary science teachers, covering topics such as 'materials and how they differ', 'making new materials: chemicals and physical change', and 'hands-on Victorian objects: material properties, design and function'.

Local societies, such as historical or natural history groups, frequently approach museums and galleries and make arrangements for an educator or curator either to come to the society's venue to give a talk, or to give a talk in the museum itself. These are generally not advertised events, but information about them is circulated among the society members, often through a newsletter. In many cases, the museum or gallery has a very close relationship with relevant local societies, with curators or educators acting as society officials, and museum spaces sometimes being used for meetings.

Students from many different kinds of institutions use museums and galleries, including universities and colleges, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and other adult education provision. Students may be at different stages of learning. Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery in Glasgow, for example, works with the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and postgraduate students from the Departments of Fine Art and Decorative Arts at the University of Glasgow. The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester provides lectures for BTEC and GNVQ Travel and Tourism students from local colleges; it has also organised group visits to the museum for retired people, in conjunction with Harry Ramsden's fish-and-chip restaurant, a celebrated local institution.

From these examples, it is clear that the audiences for adult education in museums are wide, and that many of the opportunities are developed through collaboration with a range of partners. These partners include universities, colleges, the Local Education Authority, the WEA, and other museums. Very many museums have strong relationships with their local universities. Sometimes, too, the partnership involves more than two parties, as is the case

in a doctoral programme recently introduced by the British Film Institute (BFI). This is an interesting and unusual approach which involves the BFI, the Architectural Association, Birkbeck College, and the Tate Gallery in London. Doctoral students will be exposed to a range of interdisciplinary practices which cut across literature, film, media, and cultural studies.

Current provision for adult education in museums and galleries is wide-ranging in depth, variety, and quality. On the whole it is innovative and entrepreneurial, rapidly moving into new areas both of subject-matter and of the market-place. It is responsive and reflexive, and generally successful. However, the local authority museum sector, where many museums have suffered extreme resource reduction in the last few years, has the most difficulty in sustaining provision for adults. This is the museum sector which has relied most heavily on funding partnerships with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) for their school services, the area of education where most provision has been made. As these partnerships have been withdrawn, new approaches to museum education provision have had to be developed. This transitional period has been traumatic, with many museum education posts either lost or substantially modified. However, greater opportunities for adults are emerging as local authority museums define their educational responsibilities more broadly, and find new ways to deliver museum education for a wider audience.

## Managing Adult Education in Museums

Although the range of provision for adult audiences is frequently broad-ranging and dynamic, management structures are fragile and often tenuous.

In comparison with other aspects of their educational work, few museums allocate a great deal of time to the provision of adult education. Of time spent on educational work as a whole, most museums spent less than one-third on adult work, with many respondents to the questionnaire citing 5–10 per cent. This includes all types of museum.

It is only in a few of the national museums that more time is available for adult education. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London is unique in that about 80 per cent of educational time is spent on work with adults. Here, the school service has been very run down for many years, and it is only in recent times that this is

being rebuilt. At the British Museum, the time spent varies from 30 to 50 per cent, depending on changing priorities. More time is allocated when newly displayed galleries re-open, or when important temporary exhibitions are organised. At the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, 40 per cent of educational time is spent on work with adults.

Only about one-third of the museums in the survey have specially designated budgets. It is likely that across museums as a whole, very little money is set aside for adult education. Some museums have no budget for any educational work at all, but where such a budget does exist, it is not always possible to identify a specific amount for adult work.

Few museums are able to raise funds through sponsorship for adult education. It is only the big national museums where this is possible, but here the contribution may be substantial, or mean the difference between running or not running an education programme. At the Victoria and Albert Museum, about 15 per cent of the budget for adult education is raised through sponsorship. At the British Museum, planning an adult education programme to accompany a new exhibition is often dependent on raising sponsorship. Some smaller museums have been successful in raising a few hundred pounds per year for some educational provision. The Geffrye Museum in London is unusual in raising about £1,000 per year for adult provision.

Most museums are charging for adult education. In fact much adult work is self-financing. However, the charging policy is generally very sensitive to local needs and possibilities, with some events being free if it would be impractical to charge. Where monies are likely to be forthcoming, charges are made. However, in some cases, even where charges are in place, every effort is made not to exclude people on grounds of cost. The brochure of the Open Museum, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, is explicit: 'We have no wish to debar students on grounds of income and we reserve a number of standby places on each course.'

There is no overall approach to the level at which fees are set. This varies enormously from museum to museum. At the British Museum almost all provision, apart from adult study days, is free. However, the provision itself is dependent on raising sponsorship. Ulster Folk and Transport Museum charges enough for courses to cover the costs of the teachers, and this is a very common approach. There is little evidence of the existence of commercial val-



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ues – educational values and access for a broad public are more important. Some leisure classes may be charged at a commercial rate. At Dean Heritage Museum, however, lectures are free but 'invariably' bring in donations. At Beamish no charge is made for INSET courses, while at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, a charge is made for tailor-made INSET for a whole school staff for one day. Charging has on the whole been accepted, for adults if not for schools, and many museums recognise that without charging for events it would be impossible to run them.

It is rare to find one person with the responsibility to develop and provide adult education. This is the case at the National Maritime Museum, where the post of Head of Adult and Continuing Education is established. A similar post, Head of Adult and Community Education, exists at the V&A. In both these institutions, it is possible to identify budgets and policies for adult education. Sometimes responsibility for adult provision is seen rather broadly, as at Walsall Museum and Art Gallery, where the Events Officer is responsible for adult education. At the British Museum responsibility is split between the officer responsible for events and the curators in the various academic departments. Similarly at the Geffrye Museum, responsibility for adult education is shared between the education staff. At the Ulster Museum, responsibility is split between the Education and Marketing Departments; in Glasgow Museums, it is divided between curators and educators, and in addition, the Museum Friends group takes some responsibility.

These examples of split responsibility indicate how broadly spread throughout the museum is work with adults. In many large and medium-sized museums it would be impractical to try to manage this through one individual, as frequently a request to a specific expert for a talk, for example, is dealt with by that person who responds, arranges the dates and venues, writes and then delivers the talk. In such cases, where the museum has many specialist departments and requests are frequent, it is generally the case that no one knows what adult provision is being made at any one time. In cases such as these, which are not rare, the museum is likely to be involved in far more adult education than it is aware of. Clearly this is a bizarre situation that needs to be remedied by a central reporting system. The museum's Annual Report, or the Report of the education department could be used for this purpose. If the work goes unrecorded and unknown, an essential contribution to the life of the community becomes invisible, and museum management is

deprived of one means for demonstrating the social value of the institution.

Where there is no one responsible for either education or adult education, as at the Dean Heritage Museum, the Director takes responsibility for the delivery of adult education along with all his other responsibilities, including work with other educational audiences.

A range of people are involved in the delivery of adult education. While museum educators are perhaps most frequently found at the point of delivery, curators are also substantially represented. Freelance lecturers are often employed in national and some independent museums, and volunteers are also sometimes engaged. At some museums, local professionals are called on to give talks or run courses; at the Geffrye Museum in London, for example, members of staff from Hackney Community College are involved in the museum adult education programme. Trained volunteer guides are used in the National Museums of Scotland, and at the Dean Heritage Museum specialists volunteer to give talks and demonstrations. Sometimes, as in Glasgow Museums, Friends act as volunteer educators.

The management of adult education is complex, often spread across the museum, and in many cases there is no clear view of the totality of provision. Funding is sometimes tenuous, and many different kinds of people, from within and also from outside the museum, are involved in delivery. As stated above, it is the rare museum that has one staff member with complete responsibility for adult provision, and it is equally unusual to have a clearly defined and delegated budget.

## 'Proper Arrangements' for the Future

It would appear that where adult education is currently being provided, there are very clear views on how it might be developed. All the survey respondents were able to describe in detail the developments that they would like to see in their particular service.

The Victoria and Albert Museum wants to be able to provide far more low cost and free non-academic informal opportunities, more practical workshops and more community-based work. Sheffield Museum would like to reinstate its mobile museum and the accompanying outreach worker post which has been cut in recent years. Ulster Museum wishes to increase its outreach work, espe-

cially to women's groups in West Belfast. This work has begun, but is difficult to develop without more staff. The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester would like to organise courses for economically disadvantaged adults, but this depends on raising money.

However, although all respondents had excellent and practical ideas about how the work could grow, few could see any real possibilities in the near future. All developments were dependent on more resources. Specialist staff are the most needed, with funding and space provision also mentioned very frequently. One or two museums feel that a creche, or the introduction of information technology would be helpful, but in the main developments in adult education are being prevented by such basic requirements as staff, money and space.

In some places, developing work with adults is less important to the museum than extending and broadening school provision. Sometimes this is because of revenue potential. In some where an entry fee is charged, and schools pay for educational provision, numbers are such that this is a substantial budget item either for the museum as a whole or for the education department as a cost centre. Adult work is neither as regular, nor as dependable and predictable, and development costs, in terms of staff time, are likely to be considerable. This is even more so in terms of outreach work, where networking and the building of relationships is time-consuming, and success is not always guaranteed.

The survey revealed that adult education is an area of museum work with great potential. It is one facet of the relationship of the museum to the community. It represents one aspect of provision for audiences, along with the provision of exhibitions, publications and research opportunities. Adult education is a highly visible demonstration of the value of museums.

However, it is under-developed in museums. The reasons for this under-development are many. They include lack of funds, lack of delegated budgets, lack of sponsorship, lack of an overall manager, lack of space, lack of unified policies. Over it all hangs a general though unspecified feeling that the work happens despite the museum rather than because of it. Adult education in many cases happens in the spaces in between other 'more important' matters. It is squeezed in between the other duties of busy curators and educators.

Museums and galleries have come a long way in the past 15 years in transforming themselves from scholarly institutions only into places where entertainment, leisure-learning and scholarship are open and available to many. But we are still not maximising the museum as a place of relevance and interest to all. We still have enormous opportunities that are not being taken up, and some of these are in the area of adult education. The existing provision for adult education in museums and galleries demonstrates that appropriate methods, relevant skills and good practice are in place, but the lack of 'proper arrangements', firmly established management structures, means that these methods, skills and practices are fragile, and could be lost or marginalised.

Providing for adult education offers museums today the chance to demonstrate clear social, cultural and economic value. Museum managers and governors should be proud of the exciting results that have already been achieved in their institutions, and should be using them so as to confirm why society needs museums. More resources allocated to the provision of adult education would enable firstly the expansion of much good work that is already in evidence; secondly, the establishment of 'proper arrangements' for its long-term continuation; and thirdly, the gathering of qualitative information on the educational, social and cultural benefit of participation in museum adult education.

The museum world is just beginning to recognise the usefulness of qualitative audience research. Market research using ethnographic methods has transformed approaches to exhibition planning at the new museum in Croydon (MacDonald, 1995), and a similar approach is being used to consider new approaches before finalising new display developments at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. Equally, museum education officers are beginning to find ways to evaluate their school services, partly in order to justify their existence in troubled times, but also to improve professional practice (Hein, 1995; Pontin, 1995). The methods used in both cases are similar, deriving from naturalistic or ethnographic approaches to evaluation, and relying heavily on in-depth interviews, focus groups, observation and recording.

Part of the proper arrangements for adult education in museums should be an attention to evaluation. The data gained would improve professional practice where necessary, provide statistics in terms of numbers participating, but far more importantly, would demonstrate the changes in perception, the growth of confidence,

the opening up of new ideas, the greater sophistication of concepts, the increased skills, the greater knowledge of collections and all the other benefits to be gained by becoming involved in adult education in museums. This is the 'value added' dimension for museums. Although it is difficult for museum managers and governors to think in terms of quality of experience rather than in terms of numbers through the door, this has to be the way forward for museums. Numbers alone are not enough.

We still need to develop a vision that places the museum centrally as an educational institution. This involves advocating a common view that museums are part of lifelong learning, and also means developing an understanding across the museum of the learning needs of adults. Such needs range across different forms of intelligence and different learning styles. Life-cycle perspectives and an understanding of cultural difference are also vital. It will not be simple to introduce an understanding of the psychology and sociology of learning so that it permeates across the museum, but it must be done. More practical matters, such as policies, funding and staffing, are underpinned by this understanding of learning needs.

Museums need to become more concerned with the quality of the experiences of visitors, placed within a more committed, more philosophically informed view of the role of museums within society. In museums today it is difficult to see beyond the need to survive into next week. As one survey respondent stated: 'Good adult education does not significantly add to numbers of museum visitors, nor to revenue.' However, this short-term approach is self-perpetuating, not least in an ageing society. A more radical change of philosophy and a greater commitment to the community that museums serve are essential if the wider provision of adult educational opportunities is to be achieved.

## *Note*

1. The information for this chapter was gathered through a questionnaire which was sent to 20 selected national, local authority and independent museums and galleries. All of the questionnaires were returned, with two museums (the National Museums on Merseyside, and the Horniman Museum in London) sending back more than one return. A great deal of other material was also sent, including leaflets, posters, flyers and notes. The museums in the sample were selected as typical of their type, and cover large and small institutions in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. There was no attempt to survey a



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representative sample of the 2,500 museums in Great Britain. Rather, the survey suggests trends and patterns of practice. This was supplemented by a telephone survey to confirm the findings. I am immensely grateful to my colleagues for their generous help.

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CHAPTER 4

# The Adult Learner

*David Jones*

David Anderson has given a wide-ranging overview of the historical and philosophical context within which adult learning is embedded (Chapter 1). This short chapter concentrates on some of the issues he identified as theoretical foundation to a recognition of the particular learning styles of adults and on specific points which may help adult educators – and educators of adults in museums – to elicit maximum learning benefits for all.

Until quite recently, the education of adults was considered as not very different from the education of children. Most of the educators who taught in adult classes were by training and expertise school teachers, with the result that their methodology was similar to that employed in teaching children.

However, there has now been a marked shift in this view: it is recognised that as adults differ from children, the way in which they are taught – or encouraged to learn – must take cognisance of this difference and be adapted accordingly. As a basis, it must be remembered that adults do not form a homogeneous group. They differ not only in their previous education and experience, but also in their motives for wishing to avail themselves of educational opportunities offered; they have different personal circumstances (time, money, family and working commitments, attitude of partner) and are in different stages of fitness and health. With the expansion of access by a wider range of people to such learning opportunities it has become necessary to redefine much of the conceptual framework which had previously been taken for granted as being suitable for all. For instance, since older people and people with disabilities are actively being encouraged to take part in creative arts classes in dance and movement, we have been forced to

redraw the boundaries which delimit what we mean by these terms. Dance is no longer just 'classical ballet' or 'contemporary dance' but now includes a whole range of activities where participants are encouraged to use their bodies as a creative medium of expression. Adults are increasingly required to learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and develop new abilities throughout their lives. Many of us, as adults, have had to come to terms with technological advances such as the computer, to understand new knowledge relating to health and diet and to adjust our behaviour accordingly, to develop new manual skills related to hobbies: retraining is now a normal part of the world of work.

On the basis of the above, it is essential to recognise the general characteristics of adult students, bearing in mind that there will be a wide variation in terms of personality, ability and background. Alan Rogers (1986:24) gives the following summary:

- they are in a continuous process of growth, not at the start of a process
- they bring with them a package of experience and values
- they come to education with intentions
- they bring expectations about the learning process
- they have competing interests
- they already have their own set patterns of learning.

Adults, by and large, involve themselves in educational opportunities from choice. Tough (1981) shows that many learning activities in which they involve themselves are self-directed – no professional teacher or educational provider is required. People can (and do) learn and develop, for example, from walking around a museum or art gallery, from listening to an orchestra, reading a book or using the Internet. Such interactions are undertaken voluntarily and often for a purpose. Where children attend school because they have to, adults are more likely to become involved in educational activities because they want to.

Peter Jarvis (1995:50–53) examines the research into motivation for attending adult education courses and concludes that reasons for attending are not, usually, solely to do with the learner but lie in the 'dynamic tension that exists between learners and the socio-cultural world'. Hence, socio-economic class, previous education, attitude of family and friends, available time and money may

all play a part in determining whether or not an adult is motivated to engage in an educational activity.

But, even if thus motivated, it must be remembered that adult students may also break off their studies and leave. One of the problems sometimes faced by the teacher of adults arises from the very nature of the adult status of participants: if they do not like the class or other learning context, they will simply cease to attend. If they do not like the way exhibits are arranged or labels are written (or sited) in a museum or art gallery, they may ignore them and leave. This very fact gives adult students a power and an authority not enjoyed by children and necessarily impinges upon the ways in which teachers of adults structure their tuition. Adult educators must enter into a partnership with their students – they cannot exercise the authority of the school-teacher who has a legal duty to ensure that children undertake the learning prescribed by the National Curriculum.

Adults have a greater reservoir of previous learning and life experiences on which to draw than children. They have already undertaken many learning experiences both at school and beyond. They value their knowledge and experience and use it to make contributions to their learning environment. They have also developed their own value system: they know what they like and what they consider to be worthwhile. This does not mean that they are unwilling to alter or develop their views, but it is important to recognise that participants in a learning group will hold differing values and ideas about the nature of the subject being studied and the degree of esteem they attribute to it. They will each have their own constructions of the reality of the material they are studying.

It is important for adult educators to recognise that if such firmly-held beliefs and values are challenged, this is akin to challenging the integrity and personality of the individuals concerned, and they will respond to such 'attacks' in a number of ways: they may leave the group, deciding it is not suitable for them; they may become aggressive and question the perceived authority of the teacher; or, ideally, they may enter into a reasoned discussion of the issues. Such likely reactions have led teachers of adults to assume, among other roles, that of 'facilitator', managing the activities of the group in a way which will ensure, as far as possible, that learning takes place in a congenial atmosphere.

It must be remembered that adult students have differing views about their own ability to learn and varied expectations

about what should take place in a learning situation. Some whose experiences of school were unhappy may be lacking in self-confidence when it comes to post-school education, even if they welcome the opportunity to push themselves to new levels of achievement and explore new areas of knowledge. Furthermore, educational activity will take up only a small part of an adult's normal responsibilities – there are other commitments with which their educational work must compete, so that they may not always be able to concentrate on it to the extent they would like.

We have all developed strategies for learning which are right for us, and methods suggested by others may be alien and uncomfortable, and may present difficulties for some adults in specific learning groups. Squires (1981) identified different styles of learning, and it is important for the teacher of adults to realise that there are numerous ways in which adults learn. It is now accepted that when we speak of learning we do not simply mean the acquisition and memorising of facts. The term is also used to encompass a whole range of behavioural changes which can occur as a result of an educational experience. The term 'development' might be more appropriate. There have been many attempts to categorise the different ways in which people learn; however, none of these models is entirely satisfactory in that they never seem able to encompass the whole range of educational activity. Many of them were written from the perspective of those who perceive learning solely as the acquisition of knowledge – by those from a more academic tradition. This perspective sometimes fails to cope with learning in, for example, the creative arts or in the area of skill acquisition.

One well-known and influential model is that developed by Bloom (1956), which sees the objectives of learning as being either to develop *psycho-motor skills*, to acquire *cognitive* knowledge or to develop certain *affective*, emotional or attitudinal responses to phenomena. This model still forms the basis of much teacher training.

The development of psycho-motor skills includes activities like learning to drive a car, throw a pot on the wheel, dance a jig or make a wrought iron gate. Cognitive knowledge might include knowing the dates of accession of the Kings and Queens of England, the ability to solve quadratic equations in algebra, the ability to analyse the composition of a painting or the ability to accurately date an archaeological find. This category includes both the acquisition and the application of knowledge.

The affective domain includes learning how to appreciate a symphony by Beethoven, developing the patience necessary to complete a complicated piece of embroidery, gaining self-confidence or acquiring listening skills in counselling situations.

But even this much-used model is not comprehensive: in much art education, for instance, participants develop high levels of perceptual acuity. This is neither a psycho-motor skill nor a form of cognition (though this latter case might be argued in some circumstances). If anything, it is a physiological development.

And where does the development of creative ability fit into this scheme of things? Learning how to write a poem, compose a concerto, paint a mural or choreograph a dance do not lie easily within Bloom's taxonomy. Yet they are all legitimate learning outcomes from different kinds of educational experiences.

Dissatisfaction with Bloom's conceptual framework gradually led some thinkers to explore other models. Kolb and Smith (1988) categorised the different learning styles their students preferred and developed a model of four learning styles with their 'user's guide'. Kolb's (1984) work centred mainly on experiential learning, a field explored by other writers, where the life-experience of adults can bring an added dimension. The term 'experiential' is generally used to describe that learning which takes place as a result of becoming involved in some activity, either arranged by a teacher or by oneself.

Much of this research into learning styles has been pragmatic, growing out of an attempt to find more effective ways of operating as a teacher of adults. Thus some writers like Boud and Walker (1985; 1990) have developed models to explore the way we learn from reflecting on our experience and explained how these models can be used as a basis for organising educational encounters for adults. They also warn (1993) of the dangers of attributing more to a model than the model deserves. For them, models are always tentative; for many practitioners, however, they become a credo.

Following on from the above outline of adult learning theory, we can now ask in what ways museums can contribute to the learning experiences of adults. It may be appropriate to reflect on the experience of visiting a museum or gallery, either alone or in company with others. What do we make of the objects on display?

It is becoming increasingly accepted that perception is culturally determined; that the way in which we see the world, the artefacts in a museum, the way in which we make sense of the images

on our retina, is determined by the context in which we grew up and learned to perceive. In cultural studies and in the visual arts it is necessary to develop levels of perceptual acuity so that participants can make sense of any artefacts they encounter. Museums play a pivotal role in this area: where else in one's neighbourhood is it possible to see relatively easily objects from cultures other than one's own?

Here I am using the term 'culture' to denote only differences in ethnicity. However, cultures can be defined within other parameters. Thus it is possible to consider time, age, socio-economic class and geographical location as significant determinants of a particular culture. We can refer to seventeenth century European culture, youth culture, working-class culture, Scottish, Welsh, Irish or northern culture as well as, for example, British, Indian or Chinese culture. The experience of museum collecting and museum exhibitions readily illustrates this point.

One of the most obvious reasons for visiting a museum is for the appreciation of works of art, cultures, artefacts or even civilisations. Appreciation is central to much learning that takes place in the liberal arts, since it depends on adequate levels of perception and discrimination – all skills which can be experienced and developed within the museum. Similarly, science museums make an important contribution in helping adults to come to terms with fundamental laws of physics, with aspects of mathematics and with the rudiments of chemistry. In fact, the multitude of specialist museums that have come into existence in recent years should help to facilitate adults' learning in a wide variety of educational settings.

There are now many publications which focus on aspects of adult learning. These include books by Jennifer Rogers (1969 and 1989), Alan Rogers (1986), Stephen Brookfield (1987), George W. Rebok (1987), Albert Tuijnman and Max van der Kamp (1992), John Daines, Carolyn Daines and Brian Graham (1992), and Peter Jarvis (1995). While most of these, and others, deal with the differences between the education of adults and that of children, the Nottingham Andragogy Group (andragogy as opposed to pedagogy) moved on from simply pointing up the differences between childhood learning and adult learning and developed a 'concrete model and theory of andragogy' (1983). They listed a number of assumptions on which their theory of andragogy is based and methodologies appropriate to an andragogical approach to the

teaching of adults. The salient features of the andragogic process are identified as being, *inter alia:*

- non-prescriptive
- continuous negotiation
- shared individual and group responsibility for learning
- valuing process as part of learning
- mutual respect.

These features demonstrate some of the differences between children and adults learning. If they are borne in mind, adult educators, in whatever learning environment, may enhance their teaching potential, to their own benefit and that of adult learners.

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CHAPTER 5

# Access to Museum Resources by Adult Learners

## 5.1 Adult Programmes at the King's Lynn Museums

*Faye Kalloniatis*

Having come to museum education from an adult education background, it was apparent to me that courses for adults often missed the opportunity to actively use museums in order to enhance their courses. Subjects such as history or art and design (which could relatively easily make use of museum collections), did not routinely do so. New entrant though I was, I felt that museums themselves were partly to blame for this. The demands of schools, a well-established user group, can be so great that little time is left to plan beyond their needs. Yet, as a community resource, museums have a responsibility to provide educational opportunities for a wider audience than just schools.

At the King's Lynn museums (of which there are two), potential adult user groups were identified and contacted.[1] They were invited to discuss how the museums' educational resources could either complement, improve or extend their current provision. Programmes resulting from these discussions fell into two categories: those newly and jointly devised between the museum and the relevant adult education group, and those tailored to fit into existing courses. For the latter, the aim was to integrate the museum component into the existing course and not to regard it merely as an optional extra.

In the King's Lynn and West Norfolk region, the two main providers of education for adults are Norfolk College and the Adult Education Centre. An initial, general invitation to tutors from both organisations to attend a session dealing with the museum as a teaching resource met with no, or at least little, success.


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On reflection, this was not surprising since one, 'catch-all' meeting could not hope to interest such a diverse and disparate group. More successful were the later meetings, which were more closely attuned to the interests and needs of specific groups. These meetings established useful contacts, and commitments to joint initiatives were made.

As yet programmes are in the early stages of development but the following outline gives a flavour of the types of adult programmes being planned.

### *The Workers' Educational Association (WEA)*

In the past, the WEA has offered a 10-week course entitled 'The story of King's Lynn'. This examines the history of the town, focusing on the documentary sources. It was agreed that the WEA and the museums would jointly offer a 20-week course, using the museum collections to complement and extend the documentary sources. The museum sessions were based on the artefacts and gave participants the opportunity to handle the objects and to examine them closely for clues about their manufacture and use. The intention was to enhance and broaden students' views of the social, religious and industrial life of historical King's Lynn.

At the end of the course, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. There was general agreement that the opportunity to handle and discuss the artefacts had enhanced the course and had complemented the study of the documentary sources. Another recurring comment was the increased appreciation of how the study of even common everyday objects (such as domestic cooking utensils) added to an understanding of the past. Students appreciated that artefacts were another way of 'reading' the past.

Both the museums and the WEA are now committed to working together and other joint courses are being planned. These include courses on Victorian literature and Fenland history, areas well covered in the museums' collections. In addition, and to ensure the long-lasting effects of such a venture, training courses have been devised for WEA tutors and Norfolk Museums Service curatorial and educational staff. These sessions aim to:

- develop an appreciation of object-based learning
- inform tutors of the possibilities for working together with museums and to promote such co-operation

- provide practical support for those who would like to develop their courses in that way.

### *Norfolk College*

Norfolk College offers a wide range of BTEC, GNVQ, NVQ, RSA and degree courses. Not surprisingly, therefore, there was much scope for joint ventures between it and the museums. Below is an outline of some of the programmes being developed.

*Foundation Courses.* The School of Foundation Studies within the College offers a Basic Skills Bridging Course for adults with moderate learning difficulties. In the past, individual tutors have used the museums sporadically, either to help in the delivery of their City & Guilds literacy and numeracy programmes (C & G Wordpower and Numberpower), or as part of students' life skills development. The main aim of these programmes is to help students learn to become independent. The development of everyday skills, such as cooking and the ability to shop and to move with some confidence within their environment, are important. One group used a museum visit as an opportunity to think about their everyday environment and the many objects which they used. In a handling session, new objects were mixed with old – a modern toaster with one from the 1950s, a modern lemon squeezer with a Victorian one, a fly-swatter with a Victorian fly-catcher, an electric blanket with an old ceramic hot-water bottle. Students handled the objects and talked about how they would use them; they separated old from new and tried to match those which had similar functions. The visual and tactile senses were critical in arousing their interest and in getting them to talk. The museum, being object-based, provided a conducive learning environment for students who often found reading difficult.

To build on such visits and to develop more permanent links, the museums and the Foundation Studies department have developed a resource kit, 'Getting to know the Museum', which is currently being trialled by the students. The kit (consisting of worksheets) is designed to fulfil some of the requirements of the C & G Wordpower course. In order to complete the pack, several visits are required and, in addition, booked handling sessions are advisable.

*BTEC/GNVQs in Leisure and Tourism.* Museums have an obvious role to play in any course which trains students who hope to work within the tourist and leisure industry. However, as with the Foundation Studies courses, the museums had only been used occasionally by tutors. For instance, one group was assigned a museum project as part of the course requirements on visitor services. Students had to gather information about the museums' visitor services and then had to devise worksheets for children visiting with their families. In order to ensure that such projects did not become 'once-off' activities, and that the museum itself had a more active input into the planning of appropriate projects, a joint museum and college working group has been set up. It aims to develop a museum-based package which will fulfil some of the requirements of the BTEC/GNVQ courses, and will be offered as an integral part of the Leisure and Tourism course.

*Access to Higher Education Courses.* The College offers a number of Access courses for adults. These are intensive, certificated courses which provide entry into universities, mainly the University of East Anglia. There is some scope for the development of museum-based sessions within these courses. For instance, one history course includes a module on 'East Anglian Studies' which focuses on nineteenth century King's Lynn. One or two museum sessions are currently being planned for inclusion in this unit.

The College also has links with Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) in Cambridge. Norfolk College has been franchised by APU to offer several modules of a degree course at the college campus (thus eliminating the need for local students to transfer to the Cambridge campus, at least until their final year). The history course includes a module which deals with eighteenth century King's Lynn, an aspect of which was the whaling industry. As the museum has relevant artefacts, one or two museum-based sessions will be offered to students.

As yet, contacts within the Access and Higher Education School are only few. However, this is an area which has much potential for growth and development.

### *Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU: now the Basic Skills Agency)*

Here, too, potential for the development of links is largely untapped. However, some projects have been initiated, as described below.

*ALBSU/FEFC-funded 'Return to Leisure and Tourism' course.* Unlike the College GNVQ course, this is aimed at those wishing to return to the work-force after a long break. Typically, many women fit into this category, often constituting the majority of students. The focus is, of course, the tourist and leisure industry, but equally important are the emphases on literacy, numeracy and study skills. Students have the opportunity to gain the C & G Wordpower certificate, which, apart from building confidence, can also be a useful additional (or, in many cases, first) qualification for those who may feel that they have lost out in the past and who now wish to re-enter the work-force. It may also provide a first step for those wishing to continue their studies. For instance, students may use the course as an entry point into the College's GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course.

A Return to Leisure and Tourism course is to be located within the King's Lynn Town House Museum, with input from museum staff. As the museum will be involved from the planning stage, it will help shape course content. It will also deliver some of the sessions, such as health and safety at work, using the museum as a practical example.

*Family Literacy.* The Basic Skills Agency is currently piloting a national Family Literacy programme within Norfolk. The programme recruits parents with literacy difficulties, and works with them and their children. The short courses offer an opportunity for parents to improve literacy skills through working towards the C & G Wordpower certificate. It also provides them with a chance to work with their children in literacy-related activities. Within this context, the museum can create a non-threatening environment for enjoyable and educationally-sound activities for parents and children. These activities might include parents and children working together in the galleries in various ways, such as using objects within the displays to write and illustrate stories which can then be collated into book-form. The pilot project is Norwich-based and the Norfolk Museums Service (of which the King's Lynn muse-

ums form a part) is to be involved. Some Family Literacy projects are also offered at King's Lynn and the museums hope to use the Norwich experience to make a similar contribution.

It will be evident from the above that the museums' education programmes for adults are in their infancy, and that they are by no means all that it is possible to offer. However, a start has to be made somewhere. Certainly, now that links have been formed, the way ahead seems much clearer than it once did.

*Note*

1. So far, only adult user groups within formal education settings (such as college-based student groups) have been targeted. More informal adult groups (such as special-interest clubs and societies) have not yet been approached, but clearly they form another, potentially large museum audience.

## 5.2 Community-based Adult Education Programmes at the Geffrye Museum

*Steve Hemming*

The Geffrye Museum is located in Hackney in East London, one of the poorest and culturally most diverse boroughs in Britain. The museum itself tells the story of middle-class English domestic interiors and their development from 1600 to the 1950s. It does this through a series of period room settings which are displayed in chronological order along a single corridor. The museum also has an historic herb garden and large grounds.

The museum has a long tradition of education work and was administered by the Inner London Education Authority until its abolition in 1990. It is now an independent charitable trust grant-aided by the Department of National Heritage. I shall focus on two innovative adult education projects that have taken place at the museum which have involved different groups from the local community.

### *1. Short courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages*

The Geffrye has established a tradition of working with Hackney Community College, which provides adult education within Hackney, over the last five years. During this time, both organisations have collaborated on several projects that attract local residents into the museum. Both the college and the museum are keen to establish links with new users, who traditionally have had fewer opportunities within both the museum and the wider educational world. Since 1993, the museum has been working with the college to develop a series of short courses. The idea behind these courses is to provide a new environment within which to teach English to people who are learning it as a second language. The course is run by two tutors: one from the college, providing the necessary knowledge of teaching language skills, and one from the museum, providing knowledge of the collection.

The general make-up of students who take part in these courses is important. On the whole they are individuals who have recently arrived in the United Kingdom. Some come from Europe, but many come from further afield, including Somalia, Ecuador,

Turkey, the Caribbean, Bangladesh, Zaire and Iraq. Many of the participants have not been to a museum before and have little or no knowledge of English history, let alone English domestic interiors. The students do, however, have some knowledge of the English language. The college runs language classes at a variety of levels: 1, 2, 3 and then advanced. All the students on the course must have completed level 1 before they begin the course at the museum.

This does beg the question, why use the museum with such a group? There are several answers to this. Firstly, the museum's collection has many artefacts that show how English history is linked with other cultures. This is important as it enables students to make connections with the collection and to start to understand the place of their own culture alongside English history. This helps the students talk about their own experience and begin to engage in conversation.

Secondly, the museum offers a new environment for learning, away from the classroom. This offers a different expectation to the students. It changes the atmosphere within which they learn and forces them to relate to a 'real-life' situation. Students have to converse with museum staff in the galleries, at the museum's entrance and in the shop.

Finally, the classes utilise practical activities and historical objects as devices for learning. The museum has considerable experience in using both of these as teaching aids to highlight particular aspects of the collection, and they are also useful techniques for teaching English. The use of an object allows the students to focus on nouns (when saying what it is), adjectives (when describing it) and verbs (when saying what you do with it). Because of the historical nature of the objects, the tutor is also able to talk in different tenses. Practical activities, such as dyeing, calligraphy, cookery and marbling, allow the English language support tutor to concentrate on grammatical structures suggested by the activities. For example, examining dye samples brings in comparatives and superlatives and colloquial forms such as *yellowish-green, a lot stronger, far better than*. Cutting quill pens means understanding and carrying out a series of instructions introduced by *First ... Next ... Then ... After that ... Finally*. Checking that one has understood means asking questions with the correct grammatical form, word order and intonation. Sharing out tasks amongst students means listening, understanding, and doing correctly what one has been asked to do.

The course has been a success on many levels for the museum. Not only has it broadened links with the local community and attracted a new audience to the museum, it has also shown ways in which the collection can be used to make it relevant to that new audience. It gives participants an opportunity to learn English in an exciting way that links both language and objects with their own culture and also the new one that they find themselves submerged in. It allows students to learn in an environment that is away from the classroom, but which is still secure.

While not every museum will be in a position, both in terms of its resources and the make-up of its local community, to offer such a course, the ESOL course has illustrated a way in which the concrete nature of objects can be used to develop the language skills of a diverse group. This type of work could be modified to suit education projects in other museums.

### 2. *Accredited Course in Historic Crafts for Women*

The Historic Crafts for Women course has been running at the museum since 1990. It is aimed at local women who have had few previous opportunities in formal education. The course is accredited by the London Open College Federation. This means that the participants can gain certificates that they can use if they wish to move on to further or higher education. The course content focuses on crafts and furnishings and uses the museum as a resource for study.

The course was set up as a way of attracting local people to the museum who could be said to be non-visitors. The decision to target local women was made after discussions with local community workers and groups about the perceived needs of the local community, and a lack of opportunities for local women was identified as a priority.

The initial weeks of the course were difficult. A lot of time was spent building people's confidence and reassuring possible participants that the course had something to offer. The consultation process was key to the course going ahead. Not only was it crucial in identifying local people's needs, it also gave the museum the confidence to keep the course running after the first few weeks when attendance was poor, because it was obvious that the low attendance was not due to lack of demand. Consultation was also an

important tool in developing the course content and other elements of the course such as creche facilities and language support.

The course is run one day a week over three 10-week terms. Each term has a specific project which is part of an overall curriculum. In the first term the course focuses on fabrics, in the second an object for the home, and in the third participants can choose what they want to make. The moderation process is done jointly with the students themselves, which is important because most of them have not had success with previous examinations in formal education.

The students mount a final display of their work to be assessed by an external moderator, who visits the course earlier in the year to talk to the students, and so is aware of their progress. Thus the final show is more a moment of pride in achievement than of anxiety. The whole process is designed to involve the students as much as possible and participants respond to this in a very positive way.

The course has attracted a wide range of participants from different cultures and is very much a reflection of the make-up of the local community. This helps the participants become aware of different cultural influences. A particular feature of the course has been the desire of the participants to celebrate their culture with the other women on the course. Celebratory meals, to which all the women contribute, become a regular occurrence at Eid, Diwali or Hanuka (Muslim, Hindu, Jewish festivals).

The participants are not the only beneficiaries. The course has made an important contribution to the museum as a whole, raising its standing within the local community. By having a long-term contact with local people in this way, many smaller issues and learning points about how a museum interacts with adults also come to light, such as access for pushchairs and baby-changing facilities. The wide range of cultural backgrounds that the women come from helps the museum in finding new ways of interpreting its collections.

One of the course's principal aims is to help develop the confidence of those taking part, and over the course of a year it is possible to see this taking place. Now that the course is in its fourth year of accreditation, we are also starting to see its long-term impact. Several of the students from previous years have gone on to further education: one to do a foundation course and then a degree in fine art, another to do a course in adult education. Others have gone on to employment and are using the practical and social skills that

they developed at the Geffrye. In all over 80 per cent of the students that the course has attracted have completed the accreditation process.

The fact that many of the students have gone on to further education or employment may be crucial to the long-term future of the course. With public funding increasingly tight, the museum is hoping to fund the course in the future using money from the European Social Fund.

### *Learning Points*

Both the English for Speakers of Other Languages and the Historic Crafts for Women courses have provided several learning points. They have developed from networking initiated by the museum with local community workers and groups. On both projects, this has meant different parties working towards common aims, a valuable learning experience for all involved. This type of work requires good communication, not just about the projects themselves, but about the museum as an organisation and what it is trying to achieve.

Another important element both initiatives share is the need for a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. This may sound a basic element, but it can, if ignored, greatly restrict the success of a project. All the elements of the visit, from the initial outreach work to the workshop environment must be informal and non-threatening. It is also important that other members of staff support this.

Perhaps the main feature of these courses is pitching the content at the right level for students. On both courses this has meant involving the students themselves in determining elements of course content. This means that the courses are, to an extent, client-led, and that the participants have an element of control over what they do. This will not happen overnight, but the end result is that the clients start to 'own' the courses and the quality of the education work rises as a result. For the museum this means that it is promoting a greater understanding of its collections and that it has a dynamic relationship with its local community.

## 5.3 Multicultural Education: The Mughal Tent Project at the Victoria and Albert Museum

*Shireen Akbar*

### *The Background*

In September 1990 the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum agreed to make educational development a priority for the institution. As a result the Education Department was restructured, with the creation of sections responsible for Schools, Higher Education and Adult and Community Education, supported by an Operations section. Also in 1990, to coincide with the opening of the Nehru Gallery of Indian Art and to fulfil the need to make the Indian collections more accessible to a wider audience, a post for a South Asian Arts Education Officer was created (funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation). The opening of the Tsui gallery in 1991 provided a similar opportunity to develop education programmes with the Chinese community. In 1991 the South Asian Arts Education Initiative was established, outlining a range of programmes targeting schools, colleges and the wider community. Specific attention was paid to the needs of the South Asian community. In December 1991, a new project, the Nehru Gallery National Textile Project, was set up to encourage mainly, but not exclusively, South Asian women to study the collections in the Nehru Gallery and create large-scale textile panels of their own. This project is now in its fourth year and final phase, to be concluded in 1996 when all (50) panels will be exhibited in a reconstructed Mughal tent, in the Pirelli Garden of the V&A. To date over 700 women in the UK have been involved. Groups have also been established in India, Bangladesh, Dubai, Burma and America.

The setting up and the implementation of this innovative project has compelled the V&A to scrutinise some of the issues surrounding museum education in general and the services we provide to adult learners in the informal sector in particular. We recognised the fact that the V&A did not attract minority groups. This continues to be the case, and the museum is not alone in this shortcoming. We tried to understand some of the reasons for this in the context of the textile programme and explored some possible solutions. It is apparent from the women's continued commitment to the project, from its rapid growth to national and international

status and the interest shown by educators, that the project has succeeded beyond our expectations. This case study will look at the rationale behind the project, the process of setting it up, the methodology of implementation and the way forward.

## *The Rationale*

In Britain today, we are all members of a culturally diverse society, and all people, regardless of their age or origin, need and have the right to an education that prepares them for a life in such a society. The multicultural or cross-cultural education debate has concentrated largely on 'problem-related areas' such as the language needs of those who have English as a foreign language and the educational requirements of young people in the inner cities. Although these needs have to be met, as does the need for black people to understand their own history, for multicultural education to be successful it must focus on the general needs of all, as well as the specific needs of some. The assumption that is often made, that a culturally diverse education exists primarily for the benefit of black people, is at best patronising and at worst an example of unintentional racism. This unintentional prejudice is apparent even in national institutions such as the V&A, which holds an extensive Western and non-Western collection and is one of the most important resources in Britain for the study of art, design and history. Unfortunately, the museum's mainstream programmes and activities do not attract substantial numbers of visitors from the lower income brackets or from the non-Western populations. The museum is distant and irrelevant to their lives.

Focusing on the collections in the Nehru Gallery, the South Asian Arts Education Initiative was set up to address some of these needs and to bring the cross-cultural education debate into the museum. We developed a wide range of programmes targeting Asian and non-Asian groups through schools, further education colleges, youth and community centres and places of worship. As a part of our commitment to attract informal adult learners we established the Nehru Gallery National Textile Project, also known as the Mughal Tent Project. Its overall aim was to take the Nehru Gallery to the community. The specific aim was to use the rich range of Mughal textiles on display in the gallery as a particular source of inspiration. To this end groups of women from across the country were invited to design and make embroidered tent hangings on a

scale equivalent to those at the V&A following visits to the gallery.

## *Setting Up the Project*

Although the project was planned to include all women's groups and to involve them in informal learning, our initial focus group was Asian women. We targeted them for several reasons. They are the most isolated of all immigrant groups; they carry much of the responsibility for the informal 'cultural' education of their children; and they are skilled in traditional textile work. We were convinced that South Asian women would be motivated if the project measured up to their expectations. Moreover we had the resources to offer them gallery talks in their own language, if this was requested.

After careful observation of the objects on display, we selected a subject for the project. We chose the idea of the tent for its many connotations. Tents can be romantic and exciting, such as nomadic or circus tents, or they can be physically or psychologically threatening, related to the feelings of being a refugee. All the participants of the core group shared the common experience of immigration. For them, the symbolism of the tent was powerful and easily understood. All the advantages and disadvantages of being in a new country were contained for them in the fragile construction of the tent. The basic concept was well received because it touched upon the real experiences of real people. Of course Mughal tents are also opulent and far from the vulnerable and insecure structures of poverty and displacement, but the tent offered a form that could be embellished and decorated. The participants could use decorative motifs to express the feelings and experiences of women today, thereby combining traditional forms with modern concerns. Throughout the project we remained aware that this was essentially a museum project, that the objects were our major resource and that we had to introduce the women, many of whom had never visited museums before, to 'museum culture' and the concept of object-based learning. Most of all we had to make the learning experience an enjoyable one in order to retain the women's continued interest and to ensure further visits to the V&A and other museums, preferably undertaken independently and unsupervised. Once the museum was fully committed to proceed with this new and experimental approach to museum education, we or-

ganised a meeting to present the idea and explain the full implications of undertaking such a project. Informal adult learning has its own range of strengths and disadvantages. We scored heavily on the side of motivation but on the negative side we had to recognise that all the women were overwhelmed with huge personal responsibilities of home management, child-rearing and career demands. Moreover, for a variety of reasons, many had been excluded from any formal education and were uncomfortable with the notion of structured learning. Many myths had to be destroyed and some stereotypes had to be challenged. Long before museum visits were scheduled, as a first step in self-awareness, the women were encouraged to take ownership of their work by being involved in all decision-making. Several planning meetings were held at the V&A and where possible collective decisions were taken about the overall concept, design and fund-raising.

It was agreed to study aspects of Islamic art and the Mihrab shape was chosen for the panels, to reflect the interior of a mosque. The size of the panels was standardised (10ft by 4ft) so that the finished piece would be unified. The colour red was favoured for the background material, because it was the colour of the imperial Mughal tents. Within these restrictions the women were free to express their ideas using a variety of textile techniques, including embroidery, painting, printing, appliqué and collage. All skills and knowledge were pooled. The women were totally absorbed in learning together and teaching each other, both improving old skills and acquiring new ones. Much of the work was done in community centres, adult education institutes, colleges and homes, with frequent visits to the museum.

## *Implementation*

Within the context of museum education this project is unique, not only because it targeted a hitherto neglected section of the population, but also for its new approach to the implementation of the programme. The organic and developmental aspect of the work had many advantages but some drawbacks. As the project expanded, we encountered several problems – some anticipated, some new. The Asian community in Britain, and other minority groups, rarely visit museums. Most South Asian women bear sole responsibility for all activities centred around the home, often raising large extended families on meagre incomes. Most of the

women on the project are from the inner cities, where the high unemployment rate has forced many of them to supplement family income by taking in piecework for the garment industry. For them, visiting museums is time-consuming, complicated and expensive. Often they are not even aware that museum collections exist or that they can have access to them. Recreation is usually centred around the home, family gatherings or local mosques or temples. Many groups (not only Asians) find the museum atmosphere intimidating and unrelated to their lives. To overcome some of these problems, and demystify the museum, we developed and implemented an extensive outreach programme. Utilising the women's own contacts and exploring connections through other museums, educational institutions and centres of congregation, we developed initially a national, and subsequently an international network of women interested in textiles. These women, South Asian and non-South Asian, coming from different economic, social, religious and cultural backgrounds, were enthused by the project and readily responded to its demands.

The women generated their own publicity in their communities, whilst the museum focused on educational institutions and other museums. When a group expressed an interest in the project, a member of the museum staff visited the group. They were given a slide presentation about the V&A in general and the South Asian collections in particular. Many fundamental questions about museums, their collections and their role in education and in leisure were raised and where possible answered. The women were particularly concerned about their own and their children's alienation from the root culture. Museums like the V&A, with their immensely rich and varied collections, are a major learning resource and can play a significant role in broader educational issues. The women were astounded to learn that in the museum they could see objects of historical importance from the courts of the Mughal emperors. They could, in fact, come face to face with aspects of their history which hitherto they had only read or heard about. Our visit to the women's centres was followed by an organised visit by the women to the museum. On these visits they were often accompanied by their children and by textile tutors and artists. The group was welcomed by a member of the museum staff and was given a gallery talk in their own language. Having already seen the slides of the objects, in the gallery they were excited to see the real things. Much of what was discussed and learnt at the outreach ses-

sion was tested and confirmed at this very first visit. The afternoon session was a practical one. The group leader or artist encouraged the women to focus on a particular object and make drawings, concentrating on material useful for their design. This was a very important step in their learning and was strongly resisted by most groups. We insisted on this stage, stressing that only a carefully structured practical activity could bring the objects closer and establish the first step in learning through making. From this point on there was a dramatic shift from discussion to actual creation. These early drawings and the experience of their first ever museum visit became the inspirational starting point for the group's tent hanging. We documented many of these occasions as well as some outreach visits through video and photography. Within the first year the video material was edited and used to recruit new groups and became the basis of distance learning for those who were unable to visit the V&A.

Perhaps the single most important aspect of the methodology was the emphasis on group learning through group activity. As expected, we did encounter problems. Individual egos needed to be placated and much time was spent at the design stage to ensure that all members of the group made a contribution. Understanding group dynamics became an important part of the learning.

A group of Bangladeshi girls from Tower Hamlets Further Education College visited the museum and were shown the Mughal miniatures. Unlike many of the other groups who had spent considerably longer on their panels using traditional embroidery skills, their panel in mixed media was completed in 10 days. It is bold in concept and method of execution. Their own statement supports their work:

> *Our panel is of a woman symbolising freedom. Shireen Akbar told us the story of Mumtaz Mahal. She is famous because the Taj Mahal was built for her. There aren't any pictures of her, so we don't know what she looks like. She is a mystery woman and we wanted to know more about her. We worked from a miniature painting that was an artist's idea of what she might have been like. That's why her face is covered – because no one has seen her face. It is out of respect – to preserve her mystery. She is wearing Mogul-type clothes – the sort Mumtaz might have worn. We chose the colours according to their meaning in Islam: brown means roots and fertility; green is the colour of paradise and the colour of self-assertion; yellow is powerful, it is the colour of the*

> *sun. The roots are holding her down, but her branches are blossoming at the top. She is breaking free from what is holding her back. The roots are trapping her. The symbols in the branches are our freedom of choice. They are our rights as women: to education; to earn our money, be financially independent; to choose our own husband and the kind of marriage we want; to choose our own time to do things. We felt the book should be at the top because it symbolises education. If you are educated you have more opportunities, more power. If you have education you can have all the others. We were influenced by the writings of Begum Rukia – an early twentieth-century Bengali Muslim woman who campaigned for the education of all Bengali Muslim women.*

Not all the panels have as much narrative content as the Mumtaz panel. They cover a wide range of topics, including literacy, multicultural Britain, marriage, religion and freedom. Each is imaginative and distinct, topical but inspired by the collection.

Since the project was rooted in a particular collection, we emphasised the need for all groups to visit the museum. Whilst this remained an achievable objective as long as the project was located in England, requests from groups in Ireland and Scotland, and later from overseas, made us review our original aims and objectives. Museum educators and others involved in informal adult education expressed great interest in the concept and the methodology that had evolved. We too were keen to extend the project and test the methodology in a non-V&A context and thereby establish the universality of its underlying principles. We encouraged groups who were unable to visit the V&A to look at South Asian collections at their nearest museum. As a direct result of this, a group (comprising Irish and Asian women) in Dublin began to work with the Chester Beatty collection, as did another group with the collection at Madras Museum. The success of this new and unexpected development heightened the women's self-confidence and resulted in the mushrooming of many groups all over the UK and abroad. At the local level many panels have already been displayed in community centres, county halls, colleges, schools, art galleries, religious centres, as well as museums in Birmingham, Leicester, Blackburn and Taunton. The project was also piloted in schools to assess its suitability for the national curriculum and was used as part of a GNVQ course in art and design in further education.

The makers have written about their work and discussed it on local and national radio and television. At opening ceremonies of exhibitions they have given presentations to dignitaries and their own families and friends. Some panels have been bought by local organisations, thereby providing a permanent home for the work.

## *The Way Forward*

The educational aspect of this project has extended beyond its original aims, i.e. understanding museums and their collections through group participation and practical work. The tent panels that have resulted have revealed an amazing pool of hidden creativity, skill and talent. Many are of outstanding merit. Morever, this method of working with a museum has excited educators and women's groups themselves. The public acknowledgement of their skills has contributed greatly toward raising self-esteem and prompted a new independence of action. Groups were encouraged to undertake their own fund-raising. In so doing, they have learned about the difficulties of raising funds and about budget management. Some groups have attempted to set up co-operatives in order to harness their skills and market their products. Within the museum context there have been some definite developments but much more needs to be done to build on the work which has been initiated. Having started from the familiar ground of a South Asian collection, the women are now ready to explore other cultures and should be encouraged to do so with programmes specially designed for their needs. Plans are already in place to include the groups in the education programme for the William Morris exhibition in 1996, thereby placing the needs of the South Asian community within the framework of the museum's mainstream education work. This will also reinforce the confidence the women have already shown when they have returned independently to the museum with their families to see non-Asian collections. It is important that the work of these women is seen as an integral part of British culture and not as something separate or exotic. The combination of outreach, gallery talks and practical work should continue, as should the development of partnerships with other museums, community organisations and centres of learning for adults. Arguably, this would prove to be an effective way of reaching wider audiences, both for the purpose of enjoyment and for active participation stimulated by the initiative.

## 5.4 Age Exchange: The potential of reminiscence

*Pam Schweitzer*

Age Exchange grew out of a series of adult education classes on reminiscence in the early 1980s, in which groups of local older people met on a weekly basis to write and tape-record memories around agreed themes, to compare their experiences and to relate their discussions to the present day. The process of recalling and exchanging their past lives often brought members of the groups into very close contact with each other, through shared experience, sympathetic listening and reflection on the patterns of their own generation's social history emerging from the stories told.

The publication of edited versions of the groups' memories around particular themes, such as schooldays in the 1920s and 30s, starting work in the 1930s, women's war work in the 1940s, and so on, gave a lot of older people their first opportunity to appear in print. Many of them were writing for the first time, and others were not writers at all, but were fine storytellers who enjoyed taking part in the tape-recorded group discussions and contributing memories from their own experience. Many found their voice for the first time, and surprised themselves by what they could remember and how effectively they could relate it. The resulting Age Exchange books of photographs and memories were and still are widely used by schools as source material for history projects as well as providing useful source material for adult education groups in day centres and homes who wish to start their own projects.

The memories arising from these sessions were then developed by Age Exchange's newly-formed professional theatre company into touring shows which were designed to evoke for older people in homes and sheltered housing units where they were performed many memories and material for much discussion. This was on the understanding that the sharing of reminiscences between older people, and those who care for them where they are dependent, is a socially satisfying and psychologically important activity, but one which does not arise automatically. A structure and a strong stimulus, for example a theatre presentation, live music with strong associations or a tape-slide show of carefully selected images and sounds will give people food for thought and jog memories, opening up lines of communication which are important

for those who often feel marooned in residential accommodation, bereft of the people and objects which remind them of their past lives, and, by extension, unsure of their present identity.

When an opportunity arose in 1987 to open a small building dedicated to reminiscence work in the main shopping street of the London village of Blackheath, no one was sure what it should be like. At first some of us thought that it would be a set of comfortable chairs with collections of photographs to browse through, and two or three recording booths for visitors to tape their life stories. Somebody then offered us a complete set of shop-counters and fittings of 1920s construction, complete with plenty of original advertising materials and many of the original items stocked by the old shop in the 1930s/50s. From then on, the idea of a Reminiscence Centre began to take shape. We could assemble different corners within the relatively small area available to us which would function as extremely vivid memory-triggers for visitors over a certain age. These corners would contain groups of objects relating to cooking or washing in the home in the 1930s, household objects, fashion accessories, toys and games, in fact anything which would evoke the period.

It was crucial to the success of the idea that everything in the Reminiscence Centre could be touched by visitors and nothing should be behind glass. There were no objects of enormous value, and even if things disappeared, they could be replaced with equally redolent ephemera from the same period. It was also decided early on that everything should be real and not reproduction, so that objects would feel and smell right as well as looking right. Making the Centre displays wheelchair-accessible was another important early decision. Many of the people we attract come from hospitals and day centres and it is necessary to arrange the displays in such a way that they can be easily reached and handled by wheelchair users. It is a great pleasure now to see people reaching out to open drawers in the old shop counter to explore the long-forgotten contents and to say something about the personal meaning of the objects they find inside, in some cases after months of silence and social withdrawal.

To keep the whole concept fresh and to ensure that visitors would be involved in the development of the centre, half the area would be for changing thematic exhibitions of artefacts, photographs and memories. Our premises had been the home during the first four decades of the century of a studio photographer who had

taken pictures of the local people posed in their Sunday best against his specially prepared backgrounds. Our first exhibition was therefore of photographs taken in the Centre building during that time, all of them black and white, but some of them hand-tinted, which were brought in by people in their seventies and eighties (or by their children) in response to an advertisement in our shop window. We taped the contributors' memories of visiting the studio photographer in their young days, and these memories were incorporated into the exhibition, along with studio photography equipment of the time. The exhibition was opened by a woman who had worked on the processing of these photos in the 1930s. The pleasure of local people was very great as they spotted each other (as children or young brides) on the walls and remembered what they were like many years ago, and even resumed relationships around shared memories.

Since then, there have been two or three new reminiscence exhibitions every year, often involving the construction of complete environments designed in consultation with our older visitors. The process of creating an exhibition from memories begins with the taping and writing of many stories around an agreed theme, along the lines of the original adult education classes from which we started. We often advertise the subject in the local press, emphasising that memories on a particular aspect would be very welcome, so that interested members of the public who have not joined us before can come in on a strong wicket, knowing that they have a story or some relevant documentation to contribute. For example, we might ask for memories of going hop-picking in Kent in the 1930s or of working in the Women's Land Army in the war years, and we usually find willing new contributors with fascinating tales to tell. The designer then considers the stories we have collected and comes up with a series of possible exhibition plans. These are discussed by the contributors, who add ideas and donate objects and photographs to help create the right ambience. Many of them help with the making and painting of parts of the exhibition. There is usually a formal opening of some kind, with local worthies invited, at which the contributors are the stars and their memories are published in book or pamphlet form. All visitors to the exhibition (which is open free of charge all day six days a week) are invited to add their own memories on cards which are pinned up on the wall or placed in loose-leaf files which are provided, or on tape.

The Reminiscence Centre is extremely small compared with most public museums and display areas, but this is in many ways an advantage. It feels very homely and people sit for hours chatting to other visitors. One exhibition we mounted on the subject of winter evenings at home in the 1930s was so comfortable and evocative that many of our visitors virtually moved in. There is a café run by older volunteers who enjoy telling and listening to memories, and there are professional staff on hand to run group reminiscence sessions for visitors, or to advise visiting professionals on the reminiscence resources available.

There are approximately 25,000 visitors per year, of whom the majority are older people, many are children and the remainder are professionals coming to Age Exchange for training, advice and resources from all over Britain. More recently we have had many visitors from other countries who have heard of the Reminiscence Centre and wish to develop similar projects in their own cities. Age Exchange is co-ordinating a European Reminiscence Network, bringing together best practice and organising exchanges of information, skills and resources between professionals using reminiscence in different member states. A new building opened in May 1995 dedicated to European Training and Development in Reminiscence, and this will house an accessible Europe-wide database of projects and a research library.

One of the most satisfactory developments has been the realisation of the potential of the Reminiscence Centre as a base for intergenerational activities. School children visiting the centre are shown around the past by the older people. For example, they can actually try out washing with a rubbing board, wringing out heavy wet cotton and working the mangle, supervised by older people who can tell them how they had to help with these tasks when they were young. Teachers find that the very natural style of the older people in telling stories relating to this particularly rich environment makes the visit memorable for the class and stimulates extraordinarily rich creative and observational work in many curriculum areas, not just the most obvious, such as history and English. The older people too are learning a great deal in these sessions. There is a considerable amount of 'age exchange' between young and old, so that they learn about the very different lives of young people today, and they learn about new approaches to learning which have developed in schools and in which they can play a valuable part.

The Reminiscence Centre belongs to those who use it. The core group of about 40 older volunteers take a very active part in the running of the centre. They help to make decisions about future projects at monthly meetings. They contribute their memories, they work with visiting groups of young and old. Some of them have begun (in their seventies) to make their own plays under professional direction about their own memories, and these have been toured widely in Europe. This has given many opportunities for new learning and new experience to our participants, many of whom have not travelled before and who certainly had no aspirations as public performers. The more they are extended by these activities, the more they want to learn. Now the Reminiscence Centre is providing classes in word-processing and desk-top publishing to older people in the area who wish to write their reminiscences for family and friends. The response has been overwhelming, so that several classes a week have had to be provided, with older volunteers with professional experience offering much of the tuition. So although the Reminiscence Centre is a museum and is about the past, its users are constantly learning new skills, making new contacts and feeling valued and valuable in their community today.

## 5.5 Museums, Means and Motivation: Adult learning in a family context

*Richard Wood*

The founders of the great civic and national museums of the nineteenth century would not quarrel with our current emphasis on the educational role of museums. What they might find hard to comprehend, however, is our apparent concern for the learner rather than for the body of knowledge learned. Over the past generation, museums have almost imperceptibly been redefining their purpose from that of repositories for artefacts to that of environments for learning.

Even today, most museums know remarkably little about the needs of their visitors, actual or potential. Those which have troubled to find out, and have responded to their findings, are booming. Those which have not often suffer a seemingly relentless decline as they lag further and further behind public expectations. The vast majority of adult visitors to museums today are not, and perhaps never were, solitary students. They do not seek self-improvement through a formal, if unwritten, curriculum. Instead they are tourists, browsers or time-fillers. Their main purpose is recreation. The pioneering visitor surveys conducted at the Natural History Museum (Alt, 1980) during the late 1970s found, perhaps to everyone's surprise at that time, that only 16 per cent of respondents visited in order to see particular displays; even fewer (5 per cent) went to gain specific information. Such findings are hardly surprising once we notice the company our visitors keep. Many studies, such as those at the National Maritime Museum (Smyth and Ayton, 1985) and in Florida (Falk, 1985) have found typically that up to 95 per cent of visits are made in groups of some sort, most of these (65–70 per cent) being family groups of varying ages.

For the museum educator trained in the disciplines of formal education, these visitors present a challenge. Teaching methods or content developed for a formal learning environment will rarely be appropriate for people who have no curriculum to follow, no tests to pass, no targets to attain. We have only to stand in a typical museum gallery for a few minutes to observe what a 'pick and mix' approach most visitors adopt towards our displays. They do not follow through our carefully contrived sequence of displays, but

dart around, latching on to whatever draws their attention (or, commonly, whatever their children draw their attention to). Falk (1982) likened family visitors to casual shoppers in a department store, browsing around for a pleasant social time and making an occasional purchase (i.e. studying a display) on impulse when something takes their fancy. The museum's best endeavours to channel people in the 'right' direction are almost inevitably defeated by the demands of the moment and may instead become a serious deterrent to visitors' enjoyment, and hence to their receptiveness to learning.

Constructivist learning theories, originally developed by Dewey, Vigotsky and others, have shown how people learn by constructing meanings for themselves out of their experiences. Such learning is an active process – the learner needs to do something, to use the senses, to engage with the world. It involves thought, language, a context of existing knowledge and understanding. It is not a mere passive acceptance of something prepackaged and 'out there'. It follows that museums which are designed to enable varied sensory experiences will become enablers of learning and potentially a rich resource for the educator of adults.

But constructivist theory also sees learning as a social and cultural activity. As Edwards and Mercer (1987) observed, 'Human knowledge and thought are themselves ... fundamentally cultural, deriving their distinctive properties from the nature of social activity, of language, discourse and other cultural forms'. Given the social character of most museum visits, this again highlights the value and importance of museums as a learning resource. The learner needs opportunities to engage in conversation and social activity, to test and exchange ideas, information and opinions. The informal setting of the museum can provide these opportunities. In practice, of course, many museum displays still appear to address learners one-to-one, to isolate them, almost to inhibit social interaction. But museums are changing. A generation after the dais disappeared from the classroom, the case is beginning to disappear from the museum.

For families, glass-cased artefacts with book-on-the-wall explanatory texts are anathema. Commonly the family's principal reason for visiting museums is social. They look to museums to provide a purposeful context in which adults and children can relate to each other. Within this context, adults/parents take on the

role of explainers, guides and teachers for their children. Their own learning processes as adults become essentially bound up with this role as interpreters. It follows that the success of museum displays in the eyes of these visitors is directly related to the extent to which they enable or inhibit such activity. Diamond's study of the behaviour of families in science museums (1986) revealed a range of 'teaching' behaviours such as showing, naming and questioning practised by parents with their children. Children and adults alike appear to learn as much or more from these interactions as from the displays themselves. Learning becomes a triangular process involving child, object and adult, in which the adult is as much the beneficiary as the child.

It would be unfortunate, however, to see the parents' job as merely that of interpreters for their children. Certainly this was the traditional view and, as Zien found in his study of American children's museums (1979), until recently this involved assumptions about the verticality of adult–child relationships which had changed little in 50 years. But museums are not just providers of exhibitions and displays – their educational work is often most visibly and vigorously apparent in the many special activities and events which they provide as part of their wider role in the community. Significantly perhaps, many museums are moving away from the provision of days of 'children's activities' based on their displays and are instead running 'family events' in which adults participate alongside their offspring. The Pre-School Programme at the Boston Museum of Fine Art from the start involved parents as facilitators of their children's learning. 'Family Fare', a similar practical art programme for 6–10-year-olds, was initially run for children on their own. Such was the demand from parents, however, that it was soon extended to include them too, and rescheduled to early evening times to enable them to attend. These adults wished to attend not only to help their children, but as learners in their own right.

This is not to suggest that the learning needs of adults and children are identical. Their interests and capabilities may well be quite different. They will bring to their shared experience different levels of understanding. They will come with quite different attitudes, expectations and cultural perceptions, born of different prior experiences, negative as well as positive. They will also come with different types of prior knowledge – in which the child may well be father to the man if informed by recent school studies, reading

or television viewing. Above all, perhaps, the child's perspective – seeing something through fresh eyes and maybe for the first time – may trigger in the adult companion a new understanding and outlook. Children may, in short, be the catalyst which contributes the 'moments of truth' needed to activate Skramstad's definition of museums as 'special places that are rich in context and have the potential to shape experiences that are authentic and powerful' (1993).

In this respect, some museums are clearly far more successful than others. It is not, of course, just a question of how displays or events are presented. As I have noted elsewhere (Wood, 1990), the almost universal (but questionable) practice of grouping artefacts by academic disciplines or categories ('archaeology', 'pleistocene', 'post-medieval') may be a real barrier to learning for many people. Such divisions bear no relation to the commonsense categories of daily and family life ('manners', 'meals', 'entertainment') and suggest that curators may still, after all, be more interested in objects than in people. Furthermore, the traditional separation of museum functions into categories such as curatorship, education, marketing, display, warding and so forth is unfortunate. It is only when all these areas of expertise are pulled together that a sustained effectiveness can be achieved. For a family to learn together, opportunities for co-operative activities must be provided. However, the adult with children in tow may also have a personal learning agenda. To achieve this, it may be necessary for the children, at least briefly, to be separately occupied. The children's supervised colouring table, irrespective of its own merits as a learning aid, may have considerable indirect benefits in enabling adults to pursue their own interests within the museum. Universities, churches, even cross-channel ferries, often provide crèches – why not museums? Anything, indeed, which makes a family outing to a museum easy, pleasant and fun is truly an aid to learning. Comfortable seating and clean lavatories, a café selling suitable food at affordable prices, a shop stocked with children's souvenirs, approachable warders, opportunities for play and relaxation – these may be far more important to a family contemplating a museum visit than the quality of the exhibits. To the adult educator designing a museum-based programme, such issues may seem peripheral. To their potential students, they may be of central importance and a determining factor in whether they feel able to enrol or not.

Nevertheless, the primary purpose of museums – what makes them special and different from other venues – is the collection and display of original artefacts. These are an essential raw material from which the learning experience is built. To facilitate this process, many museums have in recent years leavened their conventional displays by introducing interactive galleries. Sometimes these have been specifically aimed at children, such as the Science Museum's pioneering 'Launchpad' area. Many others have since blossomed, both small, such as Green's Mill in Nottingham or Search in Gosport, and large, such as Eureka in Halifax or the Snibston Discovery Centre in Leicestershire. These have tended to be associated with scientific, technological or natural history collections. Perhaps their instigators, reared in a culture of experimentation, have more readily understood the need for children to make things work.

At Colchester Castle Museum, however, these principles have been applied to the kind of archaeological collections usually associated with traditional glass-case displays. There are, of course, things to touch, hear and smell as well as see and read. These have rightly become the stock-in-trade of contemporary museum design teams. What is impressive at Colchester, however, is the extent to which the museum provides opportunities for learning (by adults as well as children) through social interaction.

Discrete spaces allow family or other groups to engage with each other and with the objects away from the scrutiny of other visitors. (Many parents dislike 'performing' for their own children in public.) Displays 'in the round' enable clusters of people to see, handle and discuss objects while retaining eye contact with each other – something which traditional linear displays along walls inhibit. The choice of practical activities using replicas (e.g. trying on a toga or a range of medieval-style hats or stitching a Roman sandal) invites social interaction across the generations. Children may need their parents' help, but both will learn from such co-operative activity.

It does not need constructivist theories to tell us that people learn best what they most enjoy doing. Colchester Castle clearly takes this 'feel good factor' very seriously. Unashamedly, the museum presents its artefacts in novel and ingenious ways designed to help people enjoy themselves. Most adults do not look to museums for formal tuition. What we hope they will find, however, is an environment which encourages and facilitates learning. The re-dis-

play at Colchester well illustrates how a traditional collection of artefacts can be used as both means and motivation for learning.

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## 5.6 Access to Museums by Adult Learners with Disabilities

*William Kirby*

This is a largely anecdotal account in which 'adult learning' in museums and galleries is considered as both informal and structured, and the two strands may often be inter-woven.

My perspective is that of a museum-goer, a provider of services and one who is concerned with the politics of museums. The past 10 years have seen a slow growth in provision for people with disabilities, an increased awareness of such provision as a matter of equal opportunities, and a firmer expression of the needs and wishes of people with disabilities themselves. Because I did not become 'disabled' until the early 1980s, it was not until then that I was aware of the problems of equal access or of possible solutions to those problems; that non-awareness was symptomatic of many attitudes in an able-bodied world. Gradually I became aware of a scattering of 'Exhibitions for the Blind' at the British Museum and the Tate Gallery, which contrasted pathetically with accounts of museum provision and activity in the USA for people with all kinds of disabilities, which had the force of legislation behind them, requiring equal access for all to public buildings. I was aware of a few ramps or lifts being installed in UK museums, but not of the seminar held by the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) in Leicester in the mid-1970s, which now, in hindsight, can be seen as betokening a seminal interest among museum education professionals.

So the Attenborough report on *The Arts and Disabled People* (1985) was an important landmark: after it came the setting up of MAGDA, the Arts Council's Disability Unit, and the creation of the RNIB's Arts Officer post with responsibilities for cultural activities, including museums – the world's first institution working for disabled people to have such a post. The next decade saw the creation of the Adapt Fund, an acceleration, however slow, in the provision of physical access facilities: since it started in 1990, Adapt has made some 30 awards to museums averaging from £10,000 to £12,000, and some 10 awards for 'good progress' in disability access. There were some 82 'touch exhibitions' and events (compared with only nine in the previous 10 years). However, the decade also produced *After Attenborough* (1988) and the

RNIB *Museums and Galleries Survey* (1988), which both drew attention to the disappointingly slow progress with access for all.

Public opinion still regarded access to museums as being restricted to the installation of ramps and lifts, and the Adapt Fund and funding from EC sources is largely concerned with the capital investment in removing physical barriers to access. For those whose barrier concerns their mobility, the other hazard could be 'attitudinal', and so the crucial importance of awareness-training for 'front-of-house' staff became an urgent need. That, and its constant monitoring and updating, remains the key to independent access.

Professionals have begun to include in their definition of 'Disability Access' the access to displays, exhibitions, workshops and activities for people with all kinds of impairments. MAGDA's membership has expanded and its conferences and publications have reflected this wider interest, which has produced the growing involvement of disabled people and a climate for the Arts Council's Code of Practice of 1986, followed by the MGC's *Guidelines* (1992) and its *Disability Resource Directory* (Keen, 1993).

If the first focus appeared to concern physical access, most of the access to the contents and activities of museums was for visually-impaired people. The touch exhibitions began to be complemented by information on tape, in large print and in Braille. Labels and gallery guides in the appropriate format began to be followed by a few fuller catalogues with bold illustrations and relief images. Some complete exhibition catalogues were put on tape by the RNIB Library and its Express Reading Service, which both include descriptions of illustrations, ranging from 'The Age of Chivalry' at the Royal Academy to the Picasso 'Cock and Bull Stories' by the new Croydon Museum Service. Some museums have started to record the gallery guides in-house, and complement them with way-finding or directional material and tactile plans, and many of them have come into being because they have been written, designed and tested by visually impaired people themselves, often working with other people with disabilities on the access surveys which lead to their production. Most of this welcome but slow progress has been related to special exhibitions or displays set up with blind and partially-sighted people in mind. Some of the audio-tours are guides to the more general contents of museums as well, but there is still a great need for independent access to all the displays and services in museums.

The slow, or in some cases negligible, up-take of these services must not become an excuse for their non-provision or non-expansion. One of the worst aspects of being 'disabled' is the lack of knowledge of what is available. I was startled to have this confirmed at the AGM of the Association of Blind and Partially-Sighted Teachers and Students two years ago: many of the members of this articulate and lively association had not heard about any of the services which I have mentioned. Great care and effort must be put into the managing and marketing of the provision, not only for members of active groups such as ABAPSTAS, but all actual and potential museum students, who should know of the help they can receive from Skill: the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. I can touch on only two other areas of concern: hearing loss and learning difficulties. The MAGDA seminar on the needs and wishes of people with hearing loss revealed how very much can be gained from the deep insights of experts from the RNID (1993). The Institute has told me how encouraged they are by the new levels of awareness and support for deaf people in museums: an article in *Museum International* (UNESCO) described a three-year training course for deaf guides in French museums (Derycke, 1994). The role which museums can play in the education of adults with learning difficulties is made abundantly clear in Anne Pearson and Chitra Aloysius's *The Big Foot* (1994), an account of work with younger students with learning difficulties at the British Museum – a complete reference work, applicable to students of all ages. Here is an example of excellent practice. Other examples are contained in Jayne Earnscliffe's *In Through the Front Door* (1992), a record of good practice in museums and arts venues.

From personal experience, the Harris Museum and Art Gallery at Preston stands out for two specific reasons. Ian Hamilton Finlay's brilliant five-part sculpture makes the access ramps to the front door into not only part of an elegant, unselfconscious work of art; it also provides a model of how to confront the constraints of a listed building. Secondly, I was encouraged to include in a taped exhibition gallery guide information of a general kind about the extensive facilities for print-handicapped visitors which were seriously under-used because people with disabilities were not aware of their existence.

Let me conclude with my hopes and fears. My hopes are based on the knowledge that I can still learn from and be educated by

museums, despite 'having a disability'. With the help of developments in the services described above, I believe that knowledge can be shared by other people with 'disabilities'. My fears concerning the slow progress being made by museums in ensuring that adults with disabilities are actively encouraged to engage in the learning and recreational process may be ill-founded. For instance, National Lottery applications must fulfil the criteria for equal access for disabled people. Almost 10 per cent of the Arts Council's Independent Assessors are people with disabilities or with a professional knowledge of disability issues. Already even the preparatory work for applications has seen an increase in the work of disability consultants. Thank goodness; one never knows ...

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## 5.7 Welcoming Adults with Learning Disabilities at Wakefield Museums and Galleries

*Sarah Scaife*

At Wakefield MDC Museums and Galleries we want to create educational opportunities which are locally inclusive and relevant. We are a medium-sized service with seven public sites and one Education and Outreach Officer. Although we already offer adult education in several forms I realised that there were some significant gaps. In particular there are more than a thousand people with learning disabilities living in the Wakefield district.[1] How can we contribute to their continuing education?

Visits to our buildings already provide a learning experience for adults with learning disabilities. Several local colleges and Adult Training Centres use each trip as an opportunity to practise life skills. For example, the museum is a public point of reference, a goal to reach through independent travel. As a museum educator I am concerned that visitors develop a questioning relationship with objects from our collections. I am personally committed to equality of access and feel that, on successfully reaching us, visiting groups of adults with learning difficulties should enjoy a rich experience inside the building.

My first step in the process of moving towards this aim involved a lot of luck and some bravado. I passed through the public area of the museum during one local college visit. Introducing myself, I invited the group to return to the museum for an organised education session, and we soon arranged a suitable date. Later I realised that my enthusiasm to welcome had rather outrun my skills to deliver. I had no direct experience of teaching adults with learning difficulties. What were my objectives? What would we actually do during this visit?

A key goal in educational programmes for adults with learning disabilities is working towards adult status. Wakefield Museum, like most, is a theatre of adult learning in many ways. There are conventions to be observed and observations to be made. For adults, with or without learning difficulties, it is an age-appropriate resource. I wanted the group to engage in the museum as an adult learning environment in the broadest sense.

Many adults with learning difficulties are still isolated or shunned by mainstream society. They are denied opportunities to

develop social interaction skills with strangers. Facing a sometimes hostile response from both other visitors and staff in public buildings, a trip into the inaccessible world we call normal is rich with learning situations – not all of them desirable.

Through talking, reading, listening and watching I realised that one of the biggest hurdles in beginning to work with adults with learning disabilities is fear – the fear of the service providers. Many people, some of our own staff included, have never actually had a conversation with an adult with learning disabilities. Instead we are informed by stories about 'nutters' and 'loonies' which pervade this society. Supporting front-of-house staff through training is important if adults with learning disabilities are to feel more welcome in our buildings. Continuing professional development programmes must also recognise that few museum educators have been trained in the specific framework of theory relating to the educational development of people with learning difficulties. Recent research supported by the Down's Syndrome Association is revealing:

> *There is no evidence to support the commonly held view that ... progress declines as [those with Down's Syndrome] get older, or that they reach a ceiling of development in adolescence (Bird and Buckley, 1994:9).*

Prior to a 1971 Act of Parliament, children then labelled 'mentally handicapped' were denied the right to a school education. They were considered 'ineducable'. These children, now visiting our museums as adults in their thirties, may not be able to read simply because they were never taught.

At Wakefield we have successfully attracted grant aid to run workshops with adults with learning disabilities.[2] This is in accordance with the aims of our forward plan, 'to improve services to disadvantaged groups'.[3] Direct consultation with adults with learning disabilities, professionals and carers has also revealed the need to provide more permanent resources. To turn this into reality we are currently developing appropriate and sustainable goals.

I see the way forward as through partnerships with other agencies. After initial discussions with the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) Co-ordinator at Wakefield College we have agreed on a joint project to work on several levels. He will raise awareness among college staff of the opportunities for stu-

dent development through the museum education service. I will offer workshops within the museum, pre-booked in the same way as school visits. These will be delivered in collaboration with college staff whose expertise will complement my own. We will also look towards independent access, with the students experiencing the museum and galleries on an individual basis. Staff training, at all levels, will be an essential aspect of the collaboration initiative.

Just as schools work within the National Curriculum, it will be essential to tailor activities to course objectives and individual learning programmes. Through TVEI funding from Wakefield College and further grant aid, a set of appropriate interpretive materials will be prepared and printed. These will be held in the museum service for long-term use. This initial investment in 'distance learning' will be recouped by the College through the improved quality of visits in the future – which will remain free.

So, what about that first-step education session I had offered? The group returned on the appointed day and remembered me from my initial approach. I was a social bridge between the museum building, already familiar to this group, and the unfamiliar experience of formalised museum education. Mutually developing trust became a foundation for learning. The object focus was the Waterton Collection of preserved animals. I arranged a session of observation, discussion and practical art activities, using a multi-sensory approach. Choosing personal favourites from the collections gave me confidence in the new situation. The visit was a success and I learnt as much as my visitors.

We are excited about these beginnings. Progress is piecemeal but the change in direction is significant:

> *Each year accounts are published of more and more young adults [with learning disabilities] working and living independently ... The main reasons for this change are more normal family and social experiences ... better educational opportunities and more positive social attitudes towards disability (Bird and Buckley, 1994:6)*

Given appropriate opportunities, adults with learning difficulties can indeed learn. At Wakefield Museums and Galleries we hope that we have made a significant contribution towards this.

## *Notes*

1. Special Needs Database, Wakefield MDC Department of Social Services.
2. Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council Access Initiative 1994–95.
3. Wakefield MDC Museums, Galleries and Castles *Forward Plan 1994–1997*, pp 2, 21.

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## 5.8 Programmes for Disadvantaged People at Dulwich Picture Gallery

*Gillian Wolfe*

Dulwich Picture Gallery, the finest remaining example of the work of the architect Sir John Soane, is England's oldest public art gallery. It houses superb examples of Old Master paintings from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century – a collection which would not normally attract visitors from across the socio-economic strata; however, it has done just that in recent times and, despite its distance from the centre of London, is a constant focus of activity. Much of this lively atmosphere can be ascribed to the extensive educational programme for children and adults, devised and run by a team of qualified teachers and artists-in-residence.

The Education Department was established in 1984 as part of an experiment by the Inner London Education Authority in which experienced teachers were seconded to selected art galleries so as to improve accessibility to fine art. The experiment proved a considerable success and can be counted as an unusual example of collaboration in the museum world – an alliance between an independent gallery and a Local Education Authority.

As the Gallery has almost no educational budget, sponsorship is sought for projects which will benefit those who would not otherwise visit a fine art gallery. The two programmes described below are examples of such sponsorship – one funded by Marks and Spencer, the other by Sainsbury. Both are offered on a regular basis, as it is our firm belief that short-term projects often leave participants suddenly bereft of the special service they have come to enjoy. Our minority group programmes run for at least three years, so giving us time to get to know repeat visitors and work intensively with them.

The first of these is 'Connexions', a day-in, day-out programme that caters for people with any sort of physical or mental disability or long-term disadvantage. It is an extension of the Connexion programme for young people, including those attending special schools, off-site special school centres and others who are institutionalised. This programme has, over time, become well known, as has the fact that adults, too, are regularly catered for. We further promote the programme by sending leaflets to social services departments, appropriate day centres and hospices. The

only category of disadvantage for which we make no provision is the blind, although those with partial sight have had successful sessions on a one-to-one basis with our teacher.

Visits to the gallery are prepared by the trained teacher (who also runs training sessions for those intending to work with minority groups) who travels to the group's base, meets every member personally, gives an introductory talk and slide presentation, and thus facilitates the actual visits, during which she remains with them until their departure. Sometimes diplomacy is necessary: physical disabilities and deafness are easily understood by the public, but an adult group with severe learning difficulties can present a challenging picture, seemingly out of place in the gallery setting. Only very experienced staff can handle this situation successfully, and we ensure that all members of our voluntary education team are trained teachers. Security staff are always well briefed, and they work hard with the education staff to ensure that these visits are enjoyed by the groups. If requested, the teacher will arrange to return to the group for a follow-up discussion session with slides and postcards.

The gallery has excellent access facilities. It is entirely on the flat and there is enough space for specially equipped vehicles to park close to the back door; wheelchairs can be lifted the single step into the gallery; ramps are available at the front door. The very personal and non-bureaucratic nature of the service offered has led to a loyal clientele of institutions who use the gallery regularly.

'Connexions' has recently been sponsored by Marks and Spencer for the third successive block of three-year funding.

A second project, 'Drawing Unemployment Benefit' (commonly called the 'UB40' programme), has been a particular success: when the course was first advertised the main gallery switchboard was overwhelmed with enquiries. The project was inspired by an article in a national newspaper which told of the emptiness of the days for those unlucky enough to be unemployed, and a pilot programme was funded by Sainsbury in 1994.

For a very low nominal daily fee participants can work at drawing skills in front of the paintings in the gallery with our enthusiastic artist-in-residence and a gallery co-ordinator. They are given small sketchbooks and shown how to create details of texture, light and atmosphere with mixed drawing materials, which are also provided. Each group meets members of the gallery staff,

has a short talk from a curator and takes a half-time refreshment break – all in front of the paintings. The course is designed to develop specific drawing skills, and participants are encouraged to work quite hard for the duration of the course. In a wider sense, it is designed to promote self-confidence and show that it is normally worthwhile to sketch on a daily basis irrespective of location. Motivation is strong – goals are short-term, satisfaction is clear from the continued requests we receive to repeat or extend the course. All participants receive a certificate of course completion, and this seems to be particularly appreciated by them. The results have greatly impressed the artist-in-residence, the UB40 teacher, the Director and trained art teachers; and it was particularly gratifying that the course achieved an 'Interpret Britain' award in 1994 and in 1995 received funding for the project to be continued for a further three years at the gallery.

Some examples of direct results of the programme are:

- one of the students has been appointed as an administrative assistant in the Education Department
- some students have begun Art Foundation courses
- two students are now outreach workers taking fine art into schools
- one student is training to teach picture framing
- an unemployed teacher is now a trained gallery teacher working with schools in the gallery
- one student is now a restorer on the Cutty Sark
- one student's drawing was published in the *Big Issue*
- an out-of-work writer subsequently won a BBC Creative Writing scholarship.

Dulwich Picture Gallery takes immense trouble to ensure that the enjoyment of participants extends beyond the duration of the course by inviting them to the gallery to pursue their work at any time free of charge. Furthermore, they are informed about current exhibitions at other museums and galleries and encouraged to visit these.

The gallery's achievement in its endeavours to raise unemployed participants' self-esteem through this course may be gauged from comments such as:

> *The course has been a real eye-opener. I haven't been to a gallery since I was at school; I felt daunted at first but by the end I felt at ease.*
>
> *The staff in the gallery have been so welcoming; their encouragement means so much when you have been unemployed for a long time.*

It is hoped that the renewed funding of this project will ensure continuing success. It has certainly encouraged us to plan future programmes for different sectors of our community.

## 5.9 The Open Museum: A case study in co-operation

*Diana Coben & Margarette Lincoln*

The Open Museum is a partnership between the National Maritime Museum and Goldsmiths College, University of London. At the heart of the partnership is a short course programme of liberal adult education based at the museum and drawing on the museum's wide-ranging collections. The programme, now in its fourth successful year, is jointly funded and aims to make the best use of the expertise in both institutions.

The National Maritime Museum comprises three sites: the seventeenth-century Queen's House; the Old Royal Observatory, established by Charles II as the home and workplace of the Astronomers Royal; and the main museum which houses the central maritime displays. The National Maritime Museum is set in the Royal Park at Greenwich. The buildings are themselves of great architectural importance and, together with Greenwich Park, are used as a resource for the programme's local history courses. Open Museum students have opportunities to go 'behind the scenes', to visit the conservation studios and to see objects not normally on display under the guidance of specialist curators and conservators. The programme benefits from Goldsmiths' expertise in the teaching of adults and from its experience of devising high quality courses to meet specified learning outcomes. Open Museum students have access to Goldsmiths' library as well as the specialist library and manuscript archives at the museum.

The short course programme consists of weekly lecture series and Saturday day-schools. There are also two-day events that allow students to explore key subjects in greater depth, for example 'The English Civil War' and 'The Thames Sailing Barge'. Additionally, there are special access courses for deaf and for partially sighted people. Weekday courses attract an audience of predominantly elderly people, and the generous concessions also enable students and the unemployed to enrol. Unusually for a leisure-learning programme, the courses are attended by as many men as women. This reflects the nature of the museum's principal collections, which attract many students formerly in maritime-related employment or those who have a general interest in Britain's maritime past. The courses recruit well and the programme has built up

a loyal following, with students who were originally attracted to maritime courses now enrolling for art-based courses because their confidence in the organisation and quality of the programme is such that they feel sure they will enjoy what is on offer. Programme successes therefore span a range of subjects including 'Twentieth-century Sea Power', 'Exploring the Antarctic', 'Earth, Time and Space' and 'Textiles in the Queen's House'.

### *The University's View*

The Open Museum makes a significant contribution to the college's short course programme for adults. From the outset, the college appreciated that the programme would extend opportunities for continuing education in the locality. The partnership enables Goldsmiths to offer courses based on the material culture housed in the museum which complement those offered at the college. The partnership has worked well because the aims of both institutions are congruent: the museum wants to widen access to its collections and Goldsmiths is equally anxious to help the community gain the greatest benefit from a unique national resource on its doorstep. Goldsmiths and the museum also see the programme as attracting students keen to return to the world of learning and perhaps progress to higher education.

The Open Museum programme runs on a mainly cost-recoverable basis with some financial support from both partners on a *quid pro quo* basis; funding support from Goldsmiths College is made under Funding Council arrangements for university continuing education. In October 1994 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) made changes to the way in which university continuing education is funded. In future the greater part of HEFCE funding will be linked to award-bearing or credit-bearing courses in order to promote the accreditation of liberal adult education provision. There will be limited funding for non-award bearing programmes, and universities will have to compete for a share of this funding.

The Open Museum programme attracts people who are interested in the museum's collections and related subjects. Many students are well qualified already and have no need or wish to obtain additional qualifications to enhance their employment prospects. Others are retired people with a similar outlook. Early discussion showed that even if students could be persuaded that accredited

study was of benefit, they would be unlikely to relish the prospect of undertaking written work for assessment.

In the autumn of 1994 the Open Museum programme directors therefore faced a difficult choice: they could devise an accredited programme but risk losing students who had no wish to study for accreditation, or they could operate the programme on a full cost-recovery basis. The latter option would mean continuing to run a varied, non-accredited programme even if a bid to obtain HEFCE funding for liberal adult education was unsuccessful but course fees might have to be increased to a level beyond students' means. This in turn would contravene the commitment of both institutions to greater access to learning.

After consultation with students, the decision was taken to proceed with a non-accredited programme. Goldsmiths therefore submitted a joint bid for HEFCE funding for liberal adult education to permit the Open Museum programme to continue on its present basis.

### *The Museum's View*

The Open Museum demonstrates the museum's firm commitment to the principles of widening public access to the collections and improving public understanding of their significance. While the programme has to operate on a cost-recovery basis, fees are kept as low as possible and include refreshments and admission to appropriate galleries.

The museum welcomed the prospect of running a joint programme with Goldsmiths because joint financing meant shared risks and because, from the first, Goldsmiths' reputation for continuing adult education gave the programme additional credibility. The college's experience of course evaluation helps to ensure that courses are tailored to student needs and that courses are of a high quality. Student suggestions for future courses are welcomed and these ideas are incorporated into programmes wherever possible. All courses are strictly evaluated and a recent survey has shown that an overwhelming majority of students wholeheartedly praise both the content and organisation of the programme.

The National Maritime Museum believes that education is a core museum function. To this end, it is committed to involving as many museum staff as possible in the interpretation of its collections. Initially, this joint adult education programme was managed,

on the museum side, by staff from its Education Department. As more curators and conservators were encouraged to give talks and suggest topics for future courses, the programme became more firmly embedded in the museum operation. The programme was no longer perceived as an initiative that belonged to the Education Department to which curators were co-opted, thereby adding to their workload. Instead it was understood that the programme provided a platform enabling curators to communicate their expertise and that education and curatorial staff worked together to provide a high-quality service to the public. At the same time, the numbers of school visitors to the museum were increasing and the Education Department was taking on additional responsibilities for initial teacher education, INSET and interpretative family events linked to school holidays and special exhibitions. The museum restructured to reflect the focus of its different operations. The Open Museum is now run from within the museum's Research Group and the programme benefits from wider museum co-operation and mutual support.

The museum appreciates that in this period of change curators are increasingly being asked to interpret the collections to various audiences and that some curators would benefit from additional training to improve their communication skills. Because of the existing partnership with Goldsmiths College, the museum asked Goldsmiths Department of Educational Studies to tailor-make a professional development course in interpretation skills for curators. The course was oversubscribed, and a second course is planned. Meanwhile, draft standards for higher level National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for museums had just become available from the Museum Training Institute, and it was decided to offer staff the option of NVQ accreditation at the end of the course. Take-up has been encouraging, with over 50 per cent of those on the course choosing NVQ assessment.

Building on the original partnership with Goldsmiths College, the museum has now decided to set up a joint NVQ Assessment Centre with Goldsmiths and to begin to incorporate NVQ assessment into its professional training plans for all staff.

As in the best of partnership arrangements, both institutions have gained. More importantly, both institutions have been able to maximise the use of their particular expertise, while working to achieve their own mission statements, for the wider benefit of adult learners.

CHAPTER 6

# Training and Staff Development

## 6.1 Museum Training Institute

*David Wear*

Over recent years there has been a shift towards the individual and not just the employer or educational institution taking on much of the responsibility for learning. This shift is reflected in the emerging structure of education and training, with NVQs/SVQs, for example, now providing the opportunity for individuals to use the outcomes from their learning, derived from a variety of contexts, to obtain formal recognition of their skills and knowledge.

In response to such demand for changes in the structure of education and training in the UK, non-statutory training bodies have replaced statutory Industry Training Bodies in some sectors of the economy, while in others they were introduced for the first time, thus providing throughout the UK a common basis for introducing the emerging government-lead training and development initiatives.

Industry Lead Bodies (ILBs) and Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) were established, and subsequently promoted by government, to provide within each sector of the economy arrangements for training and development which would provide for their needs and be consistent with the emerging model for education and training. ILBs were charged with developing occupational standards of competence for all of those functions in their scope. This model has had a direct impact upon educational and training provision in all areas, including schools, further and higher education and, of course, in the workplace.

ITOs, often (but not necessarily) the same organisations as lead bodies, were given a wider remit: to promote, support and put in place the training infrastructure necessary to ensure that particular sectors are able to operate effectively and to improve the overall quality of the training within these sectors.

One of the key initiatives promoted by government through ITOs is Investors in People (IiP). This demands a new response from individual organisations as they are challenged to 'commit' to the values of staff training and development programmes which are clearly and explicitly linked to their organisation's particular objectives. This places staff training and development centre stage.

The Museum Training Institute (MTI) was established in 1989, partly in response to such general requirements, and partly in answer to the Hale Report (1987). This made recommendations in response to what had been identified as the principal training issues within museums: the absence of a structure within which training might be delivered; the quality of the pre-entry training for most occupations; and the appropriateness of the in-service training provided to those already in museums. In essence, Hale was a response to the difficulties caused by the almost complete absence of a career structure and associated training and education provision for those in museums.

While the under-development of a career structure was in itself an issue for some occupational groups (curators, for example), for others, such as warders or those in visitor services occupations, there was an almost complete absence of any training at all.

As a result of the recent general initiatives outlined above, museums are now offered the opportunity to become places of learning for staff as well as those who make use of the museums' collections for formal or informal learning, creating a learning culture within their institutions.

As one of a number of key bodies with responsibilities for enhancing the quality of museums (others include the Museums and Galleries Commission, Museum Documentation Association, and Area Museum Councils), these initiatives place the MTI at the heart of the museum community, providing complementary qualifications, training and education.

Since its inception, and in its role as ILB, the Institute has worked closely with the museum community to devise statements of standards (occupational competences) to be achieved by those exercising their particular expertise within the sector. The qualification structure itself will enable those with an interest in extending their competences to further develop their skills by way of credit accumulation. Traditional modes of learning and assessment are being augmented to include other learning opportunities which now, and for the first time, have the potential to be expressed in

terms of formal and accredited qualifications. These changes seem to be entirely consistent with the primary purpose of museums, that of offering a range of options for those who would use the collections and displays for learning and enjoyment.

Approval has been received for seven museum qualifications (of these, those at levels 2 and 3 in Warding and Visitor Services are awarded by MTI in partnership with City & Guilds for NVQs, and SCOTVEC for SVQs). These seven qualifications (approved by NCVQ and SCOTVEC) capture the expertise which those in museums are required to practise in a variety of different working contexts including curation, conservation, visitor services as well as interpretation and education.

The seven accredited qualifications are:

- level 2: Warding and Visitor Services
- level 3: Warding and Visitor Services
- level 3: Museums, Galleries and Heritage: Collection Care and Visitor Services
- level 4: Museums, Galleries and Heritage: Collection Management and Interpretation
- level 4: Museums, Galleries and Heritage: Conservation
- level 5: Museums, Galleries and Heritage: Collection Management and Interpretation
- level 5: Museums, Galleries and Heritage: Conservation

Delivery of most of the qualifications will be through a nationally accessible network, with assessment provided by practising museum professionals who have been trained to undertake this role.

Access to both qualifications and training opportunities which may previously have been restricted will, over time, progressively be made more available.

As all NVQs are based upon a unit structure of which the individual components are drawn from a comprehensive map of all museum functions, the qualifications will enable many in museums to receive recognition for their contributions for the first time. With each unit being a description of the standard expected in the workplace, this inevitably means that both the skill and knowledge requirements are clearly specified (see Appendix).

Coherence in education and training provision is one of the principal purposes of the new framework, and in this respect the

MTI's qualification programme is supported by its validation policy, the purpose of which is to consider education and training provision in terms of its relevance to the work of museums.

Other expressions of this coherence are to be found in the interrelationship between the MTI's standards of occupational competence and other related, but different standards such as the MGC's Registration Scheme and the Care of the Collection Standards, the MDA's Documentation Standards, the Codes of Ethics and Practice promoted by professional bodies in conservation and curation, etc.

For individuals the benefit is through a qualification structure in which:

- the standard to be achieved is explicit
- the standard relates directly to the performance expected at work
- the units can be accredited separately and candidates can progressively acquire a qualification over time
- the standards are drawn from the one functional map and as a consequence there is internal coherence and logic between the qualifications, which aids progression between qualifications
- transfer between organisations is improved, through a shared and common understanding of individual competence, expressed in the standards.

The fundamental transformation of qualification structures is to be found not only in museums but also in most of the other occupational areas within the UK, thus enabling those using museums as places for enjoyment and learning to incorporate these experiences formally, if appropriate, into their own personal portfolios as they themselves prepare to be assessed for non-museum NVQs/SVQs.

*Reference*

Hale, J. (1987) *Museum Professional Training and Career Structure*, HMSO for MGC.

# Appendix

## *A Guide to Underpinning Knowledge and Evidence Requirements*

A section entitled Requirements for Knowledge Evidence is listed on the right hand page of the standards. In this section a number of topics are listed (usually 4 or 5 from a total list of 131). Following each topic title a brief set of statements is listed. For example, the topic *Information systems and procedures* is followed by a number of short statements such as *developments in information technology; capabilities of IT*, etc. The short statements which fallow a particular topic title are not always the same; they have been amended slightly depending on the qualification level of the unit in which the element is situated. In other words, if an element is contained within a unit in a Level 3 qualification, the text under the topic title is slightly different from the text under the same topic title in a unit contained in a Level 4 qualification.

The guidance notes below are designed to be used by candidates and assessors. They provide a more detailed commentary than that provided by the short statements following the topic titles. The commentaries attempt to describe the body of knowledge which is required, rather than the specific details of the knowledge. What is important is that candidates have an overall understanding of this body of knowledge. Each candidate will apply this body of knowledge in different ways, depending on the specific element. Candidates also have different jobs in different working environments, and as such, each individual's situation is different. While it is unreasonable to expect candidates to apply the same knowledge as someone working in a totally different environment, assessors need to be assured that candidates are competent across the complete range of situations as specified in the range statements of the standards. Possession of a suitable body of underpinning knowledge is a valuable means to achieving this.

One dimension of this underpinning knowledge and understanding which needs further explanation is the issue of Levels. The topic titles below exist in standards that are used in Levels 3, 4, & 5. Does this mean that we expect the same level of knowledge from candidates? An easy option would be to say that at one level candidates require a basic knowledge, while at another they require an advanced knowledge. However, this just begs the question as to what basic and advanced means.

It should be remembered that the Level is attached to the qualification as a whole, and not to individual units, let alone individual components of an element such as a performance criterion or an evi-

dence requirement specification. In addition, it is performance and not knowledge which is the central focus of assessment, i.e. the candidate has to ultimately demonstrate that they can actually do what is required. While it is extremely difficult to specify what candidates should or should not know at different levels (it very much depends on their individual situations), there is often a difference in what candidates at different levels are expected to do with that knowledge. For example, at higher levels candidates tend to evaluate information, rather than just recalling it, or they can interpret rather than record. This is often considered to reflect a different depth of knowledge. This being the case, the level of knowledge is reflected in the standards by developing different elements and units of competence which are used in different levels of qualification.

This discussion of knowledge reinforces the need to focus on the performance of the element as the key to assessment. By being able to perform the element, the candidates should demonstrate that they have the required knowledge and understanding. The guidance notes provide some indication of what this knowledge and understanding could consist of, but it should be considered guidance only.

### *The Guidance Notes*

#### *1 Organisational context*

Candidates should be aware of the structure and functioning of the organisations they work for or work with. The organisations can be major national institutions, local authority institutions, large or small companies (either acting as clients or suppliers), and regulatory or professional bodies. An organisation can be an entire organisation or institution, a subset of an organisation (e.g. a section or department), or a small firm or one-person business. There is no prescribed list detailing the type of organisation a candidate should have to know about, but the candidate should know about the organisations that have an impact on their specific activities. If candidates work with individuals as clients, they should still be aware of the other organisations that operate in the sector.

Candidates should have knowledge of the existence, aim, structure, functions, strategies and policies of organisations which are relevant to their activities. This also covers the governing and management systems of the organisation. This knowledge should enable candidates to operate effectively in the organisation, even if they are not an employee of it. For example, it is important that candidates know how local government makes funding decisions that affect their work. The policies of museums and galleries, e.g. research, collection management, exhibiting, storage, loan, acquisition and disposal,

should be known about in detail where they have a significant impact on candidates' activities. Where an organisation has a mission statement, the content should be known but the candidate does not have to know it word for word. Candidates should also be aware of what the key documents produced by these organisations are, and have a basic knowledge of their contents. It is important that candidates know these documents exist so that they can be accessed. For example, they should be aware of the existence of the MGC, and know that it publishes standards to cover certain activities, and should have some knowledge of what type of subjects are covered in the standards. Finally, candidates should be aware of who the key people in the organisations are, what roles they play, and how they operate.

While it is difficult to specify what each candidate should know, because their situations are so different, all candidates should have an understanding of the national framework of national institutions, national government departments, professional bodies, and regulatory agencies.

*2 Information systems and procedures*

Candidates should possess knowledge and understanding of the information systems and procedures they are likely to come across during their work. The exact nature of these systems and procedures depends on the type of organisation they are working with, and the type of activity in which they are engaged. For example, a curator might well need to access information systems relevant to collection management, whereas an education officer might need to access systems relating to historical or scientific data. A free-lance conservator might need an individually designed database for generating conservation reports, recording inventory, or even an accounts package. The system could be computerised or manual, i.e. it could be accessed through computer terminals, or through catalogues, indexes, or reference books. The systems could be designed for multi-user operation, or one-user operation. Candidates should be aware of the diversity of systems which are available and relevant to their specific activities.

Candidates should be aware of what library and information systems are relevant to their needs and available to them, at both national and local levels. They should know what the relevant indexes and catalogues are for their activities, and how to access and use them. They should know the terminology and rules relating to their use, the classification systems which are being used, and how these differ from other systems which are in use elsewhere. They should know how to enter and retrieve data from these systems, and how the information should be secured and backed-up. Candidates should have an understanding of the principles of accession numbering, and how

these can be applied. Finally, candidates should be aware of the impact of new and emerging information technology. The role of IT in facilitating access to information and increasing public contact with the sector are areas of particular note, e.g. the impact of multi-media. It is not expected that candidates should have the same extent of knowledge as that possessed by documentation or library personnel.

*3 Presentation of information and communication*

Candidates should know how to present information on their specific activities, both formally and informally, to groups and individuals who might or might not be knowledgeable in the candidate's area of expertise. Candidates should be aware of different presentation methods and techniques, for both verbal and written presentations. They should know what type of audio-visual equipment is available for presentation of information to a group. They should know that there are techniques and methods for conveying information effectively in front of an audience. For example, the need to keep to a minimum the amount of information on an OHP slide, or the size of text on a slide. Candidates should be aware of how to write reports for different individuals, groups, or organisations, and what the structure of the reports should be. They should know who might read the reports, and how they might be interpreted.

Presentation and communication are activities, and therefore if someone can do it well, it could be argued that they have sufficient knowledge of presentation and communication techniques. However, judging the effectiveness of presentation is extremely difficult, as the outcome is the effect it has on other people, and these people cannot be directly used as evidence. Only the assessor can make a judgement on the effectiveness of the presentation, and it is unlikely that the assessor will see a wide range of verbal presentations. It is important that an assessor talks through a presentation scenario with candidates to ensure that they know of the presentation techniques and methods and know how to apply them.

*4 Research strategy, methodology, techniques and body of research*

Candidates should be aware of the research strategy of the organisations they work for or with, and have a knowledge of research methodology and techniques appropriate to their level and area of expertise. It is important that candidates are aware of the diverse research methods available, and are not restricted by a narrow 'scientific' definition that might disenfranchise particular groups. Research methods and methodologies include literature reviews, investigating archives, interviews, as well as scientific tests. Candidates should

have knowledge of research design, data collection, and analysis and interpretation. For example, candidates should be able to outline several approaches they might take to an actual and/or hypothetical research problem, and be able to determine suitable strategies and methodologies for data collection and analysis. When interpreting research, candidates should show that they are able to synthesise information rather than just reproduce the research findings.

Candidates should also be aware of the key research that has been conducted in their area of expertise. They should be aware of the major research activities currently being undertaken at a national level, and have an awareness of the general trends in research and development. Candidates should have an understanding of the debates relating to their area of expertise, and how this relates to wider debates in the museums, galleries, and heritage sector. They should understand the importance of research in the activities of the sector.

*5 Legislation, regulations, codes of conduct and professional ethics*

Candidates need to have a basic understanding of any legislation that impacts on their activities. All candidates should know about the basic requirements and principles of the Data Protection Act, health and safety legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act, the COSHH regulations, and relevant employment and equal opportunities legislation. Other legislation such as treasure trove, the wildlife and countryside act and building regulations may be of more relevance to some candidates than others. They should be aware of methods for easily updating themselves on the content of new legislation, such as reading articles in professional journals and newsletters.

Candidates should have knowledge of the existence of the main regulatory and professional bodies relevant to their area of expertise and the sector in general. They should be aware of the major professional codes and standards. For example the MOC standards, MDA documentation rules, the MA code of practice for museum authorities and code of conduct for museum professionals, and the UKIC Rules of conduct. Candidates should be able to discuss these in general, but should also be able to pinpoint which code might be most applicable in a particular instance. For example, when labelling items for exhibition, information should be clear, accurate and not deliberately misleading, and it should not reflect personal bias (MA Code of Conduct for Museum Professionals, section 5.2). Or, delegating responsibility to others is only appropriate where the delegate has the appropriate knowledge or skill (MA Code of Conduct for Museum Professionals, 5.11).

Candidates should have an awareness of both formal and informal ethical codes which can guide their work. Part of this code is clearly documented in a range of professional works by individuals and institutions, but part is determined by peer group pressure and general moral principles. Assessors should ascertain that when presented with a range of ethical problems, candidates understand the ethical issues that arise.

*6 Items' history and significance*

Candidates should be able to consider information about an item and place the item within a historical or scientific frame of reference. Each item will have its own history and significance, but candidates should have an understanding of the history of the class of items to which the individual item belongs, and be able to determine its significance within this class. The history of an item should include its origins and ownership, its use, and the way its features might have changed. Candidates should be familiar with some of the more renowned items within the class of items they are working with. This also applies to biological specimens, whether they are animal or plant, or geological specimens or ethnographic artefacts. Candidates should be sufficiently expert to the appropriate level.

Candidates should know the main sources of information relating to the items with which they work. They should also be aware of the general conservation needs of the item, unless of course they are a conservator, when they should have more detailed knowledge. Candidates should also have an understanding of interpretation issues relating to the items, i.e. how they can be presented to others. Candidates need to know the limits of their expertise in relation to the items, and know who the key experts (either institutions or individuals) are who can provide detailed information on the items. Candidates should not be seen as item experts, but as curators, conservators, education officers, or exhibition designers etc. Candidates do not have to have the knowledge that dealers have on market prices etc, but should have some understanding of market activities.

*7 Handling and examining items*

Not all candidates need to know about examining items, but all should be aware of how to handle items. Candidates should know the principles behind handling, i.e. why it is important to handle items correctly, and the consequences of not doing so. They should know the handling methods for the main types of item with which they come into contact. They should know how to access information on handling, and who can provide expert sources of advice. Candidates

should be aware of basic health and safety principles to ensure that handlers are not harmed.

Candidates involved in conservation and research should know the most suitable methods for examining and handling items in general and specific items within their responsibility. Candidates might have to examine and handle items for a variety of reasons. For scientific investigation, it is clear that candidates should have a specialist knowledge of the scientific examination techniques appropriate to the item. For example, a natural scientist should know the appropriate tests to conduct on a geological specimen, whereas an easel-painting conservator needs to know the appropriate examination methods for oil-based paint and different types of canvas. In other words, there is no clear list of examination methods which can be prescribed, and each candidate will have to provide evidence of knowing the range of methods appropriate to their work. They should also have a general awareness of the types of examination methods used in other expert areas, and understand some of the basic principles of examination. Candidates should be aware of the effects of examination methods on materials.

*8 Security and protection of items and collections*

All candidates working in the sector have an obligation to contribute to the safekeeping of items, whether they be in a public institution, an owner's home, in the candidate's workshop, or in transit. Candidates should be able to explain the principles and factors that are considered when devising a security system and demonstrate their own role in contributing to security on a practical day-to-day basis. They should be aware of trends and developments affecting the security of items. Candidates should also have an understanding of how security might be improved.

As well as security, candidates must have an understanding of the protection of items from damage by natural or infrastructural hazards. This involves the need to ensure safe handling, packing, storage and display of items, rather than just the guarding of items from the threat of theft or malicious damage. Candidates should be aware of the different inherent problems and environmental threats to items arising from the different use of items. It is important that candidates should know the consequences of their actions on items, although they do not need the depth of knowledge which conservators have in this regard. Candidates should definitely know appropriate sources of advice on these matters, whether this advice comes from conservators or experienced curators.

*9 Conservation principles and methods*

Candidates should know fundamental and advanced principles of conservation appropriate to their area and level of expertise, covering both preventive and remedial conservation. For specialist conservators, there is a need to be fully cognisant of the principles and methods which underpin their activities. Those who are not conservators, e.g. curators, need to know about conservation principles and methods to be able to work with conservators in achieving conservation objectives.

Candidates should have an appreciation of the history, development and philosophy of conservation, and any current national debates concerning the role of conservators, including debates on conservation ethics. They should understand the role of conservators, and how this fits into the overall needs of the sector.

On a practical level, candidates should have sufficient knowledge of production technology and of the past usage of items so that they can understand how items are constructed. Candidates need to know about the factors which contribute to the deterioration of items and how the effect of these can be identified and predicted. Candidates need to know about materials science so that they can examine items correctly in order to determine the item's nature and condition and so that they can apply appropriate treatments. They should know the full range of examination and treatment methods, both preventive and remedial, available to them, and any new methods which might be emerging. They should know sufficient detail to enable them to predict the effects of examination and of treatments both before and after implementation and to understand how treatments work to minimise deterioration and/or aid physical interpretation. They must have a sufficient breadth and depth of understanding in all these areas to be able to determine the limit of their own area of expertise and when other experts must be consulted.

*10 Project planning, funding and management*

Candidates need to know how to plan, fund and manage projects. Projects are substantial activities involving the planning, allocation and control of human and physical resources, including finance. A project might be an exhibition, a piece of research, the conservation of an item, or a management development programme. While it is not feasible to expect candidates to know in detail how to do all of these, it is important that they know how to plan, manage, contribute to and evaluate a project.

Candidates should know how to plan projects, using a suitable range of project planning methods. If they have access to project planning software, they should be aware of how this can be used. At a ba-

stic level, they should be able to determine the tasks that need to be achieved, and the timescales for their achievement. Candidates should have an appreciation of the different factors which impact on the success of the project. Candidates should know how to evaluate the outcomes of a project, and the range of evaluation methods that are available.

Candidates need to know the general and specific sources of funding available to them, at both the national and local levels, from both institutions and individuals. For this reason they need to know the procedures and requirements of the main funding bodies, and the terms and conditions of grant awards. Candidates also need to know the fund-raising activities of other organisations, the availability of different resources and their quantity and quality, and how they can be located and obtained. They should know how to establish the cost of the resources, covering both overt and hidden costs, as well as how to negotiate the cost and provision of resources. Candidates should also have an appreciation of cost-benefit analysis, so that they can determine effective use of resources.

Candidates should know how to monitor projects, and how to retain control over resources. As manager of a project, a candidate should be particularly aware of any terms and conditions specified by grant-awarding bodies or other interested parties, i.e. lending institutions, and be responsible for keeping the project to time and reporting to the agreed body/people.

*11 Design briefs for specialists*

Candidates should have a basic appreciation of design. Good design is a very subjective matter, and it is more important that they demonstrate an informed opinion rather than demonstrate a textbook knowledge of design principles. Candidates should be able to identify particular designs which they have found stimulating, and be able to explain the features which made them interesting. The designs could be in exhibitions, displays, marketing literature, or any other aspect of the sector. Having an appreciation of design will not only assist candidates make decisions when called on to exercise their judgement, but will also help them brief designers. Candidates should know what designers need from them to undertake a brief. They should be able to understand the design process, and know what the main stages are. For example, candidates should be able to discriminate between the early exploratory stages where there are still 'rough edges' and the final production stage.

*12 Users and their requirements*

Candidates should know how to identify who is using their institution or their individual products and services, and what their requirements are. Candidates should know who the users are, how they can be classified into groups, and what survey methods they could use to obtain detailed information. They should understand that users can include members of the public, school-children, or expert researchers. Candidates should know how to communicate with users, appreciate that they have a role in understanding the needs of users, and understand that this should not be seen solely as the preserve of others, e.g. museum education officers.

On a practical level, candidates should know about access issues, such as how advertising materials, building entrances and staff might facilitate the welcoming process for users. Candidates having to work with school-children, either directly or indirectly, should have a basic knowledge of the content of local and national curricula. Candidates should know sources of specialist help, e.g. education officers of larger institutions.

*13 Role of the museums, galleries and heritage sector*

Candidates should know about the history of the sector, and its changing role. They should be aware of contemporary issues and current debates surrounding the sector, and in particular, how these relate to their own activities. Candidates should also be aware of how the national picture compares with international developments. These issues and debates could revolve around funding, collection management, conservation philosophy, the sector's relationship to other socio-economic areas, the impact of increased leisure time, the availability of volunteers, etc. What the precise issues are depends on when candidates are assessed, but the general requirement is that candidates should demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of these matters.

## 6.2 City and Guilds of London Institute

*Fiona Longmore*

City & Guilds has been working in conjunction with the Museum Training Institute to promote the Warding and Visitor Services NVQs at levels 2 and 3, gaining accreditation from the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in September 1993. These awards are aimed at what could loosely be termed as 'the people on the ground', i.e. attendants, warders and front-of-house staff.

One problem with the introduction of these qualifications is the mismatch between the perception of NVQs of the museums industry and that of the training organisations and awarding bodies involved with the delivery of NVQs. The museums industry regards itself (quite rightly) as one which covers a number of highly specialised areas and whose staff have correspondingly high levels of specialism and academic qualifications; and in industries where professional academic qualifications have traditionally played a large part, NVQs are frequently regarded with some suspicion.

One way to solve the problem of mismatched perceptions is to introduce qualifications 'from the ground up' and, once the initial qualifications have been achieved by several candidates, persuade other, more senior sectors of the industry of the relevance of NVQs to the development of a properly trained workforce. Thus the introduction of levels 2 and 3 of the Warding and Visitor Services NVQs was seen as an important first step in the introduction of NVQs across all sectors and levels within the industry.

As an awarding body, City & Guilds is very much concerned with the NVQ revolution and it is impossible to overstate the fact that, for a large number of industries, the greatest difficulty with NVQs is grasping the concept itself, i.e. that the qualification is open access, candidate-driven and flexible in its methods of assessment. Indeed, for all of us who have been locked into the culture of written examinations for so long, it can prove difficult to adapt, particularly when one is being asked to make such a change relatively quickly, as is often the case where funding is involved.

The problem in switching from one culture to another is attributable in part to concern over the very flexibility which makes NVQs so revolutionary and, at the same time, so workable. It has been said that flexibility of assessment simply means lack of quality control and that 'anyone can get an NVQ'. Yes, anyone can get

an NVQ, but only if they meet the criteria as laid out in the relevant industry's national standards. Then, and only then, will a candidate achieve the qualification. As an awarding body we are closely involved with quality control and we ensure that the systems are in place, both within centres and externally, to monitor quality at all times, whilst maintaining the flexibility of assessment which characterises the qualifications.

There is nothing to fear from NVQs. Some industries, in City & Guilds' experience, require more convincing of this than others and some industries remain sceptical of the usefulness of NVQs to their members. What was very encouraging about the first candidates for the Warding and Visitor Services qualifications was their enthusiasm and adaptability. They were clearly keen to be part of a trained workforce and took pride in their portfolios. It was also evident that they found the qualification relevant to their daily work. NVQs can appear frightening to candidates because, sometimes for the first time, they are given responsibility. The candidate must collect the evidence, the candidate must work with their adviser and assessor to achieve the units; hopefully, however, the candidate finds this approach challenging, as did the Warding and Visitor Services candidates, rather than daunting. Centre staff play a vital role in ensuring that the former is the predominant feeling.

Thus NVQs help with staff development in the broadest sense of the phrase, encouraging the candidate to take the lead in gaining recognition of their work. The qualifications also help in the development of training programmes. One criticism of NVQs is that they only 'kick-in' when the candidate's training is complete, i.e. when the candidate has reached a sufficient standard to feel confident enough to undergo the assessment process. In fact, the NVQ candidate's initial development plan will identify gaps in that person's expertise or knowledge which can then be filled by additional training or on-the-job experience, and NVQs can therefore aid staff training.

There are, clearly, museum-specific issues relating to training and staff development; for example, the question of the requirements of the numerous volunteers working in the industry. It is hoped, however, that such issues will not prevent take-up of these valuable qualifications.

I would like, briefly, to expand beyond NVQs to discuss other qualifications. The vocational qualification revolution encompasses the notion that there is no rigid pattern of qualifications

which must be adhered to. NVQs are not the whole story: GNVQs are available in an ever-increasing number of subjects and it is possible for a candidate to take units from one NVQ and add units from another NVQ and/or a GNVQ to build up a portfolio of tailored qualifications. Thus a Warding and Visitor Services candidate could take a Customer Services NVQ unit and/or a Leisure and Tourism GNVQ unit. This 'mix and match' approach can be extended to the more traditional qualifications, so that a candidate could add a GCSE or an A-level to their portfolio.

From the above it can be seen that the Warding and Visitor Services NVQs provide a firm stepping-stone to other NVQs within the museums sector and other qualifications. City & Guilds' involvement will be limited to the qualifications currently available, as the Museum Training Institute is now an independent awarding body for NVQ levels 3, 4 and 5 in England and Wales, and a joint awarding body in Scotland with SCOTVEC. However, we are encouraged by the interest shown by a wide range of potential assessment centres, including borough councils, universities, colleges and both large and small museums, and we hope, in conjunction with the Museum Training Institute, to build on this interest, establishing a precedent for national vocational training within the museums sector, training which we foresee as being of huge benefit not only to individual members of staff working in museums, but also to the industry itself. The NVQ revolution is spreading and it is vital that both industry and education play a major part in it.

## 6.3 Work Placements at the National Trust

*Suzanne Whitehead*

The Museum of Childhood at Sudbury Hall has developed links with work placement co-ordinators at local schools and universities in order to encourage students to undertake short periods of work experience (from one week's to one month's duration) within the museum. Placements often form a part of students' course assessments, and their success depends upon close liaison between museum staff and individual students, to ensure that the needs of both parties are met.

We aim to provide students with an introduction to the diverse range of skills involved in museum management and presentation. These include 'front-of-house' activities – display, education, events, interpreting in galleries, and visitor services – and 'behind the scenes' work – documentation, preventative conservation, enquiries, and collection research. Through a hands-on introduction to the world of work, students also acquire interpersonal, team working and time management skills, which will be of value to them in pursuit of a future career.

The museum also benefits from the placements, as it gains valuable hours of voluntary work from the students, and it is provided with an excellent opportunity to promote its activities to a young adult audience.

In the future, the museum intends to increase its provision of work placements for members of the local community. With this aim in mind, we have recently developed a partnership with Burton-on-Trent Careers Advisory Service to publicise the museum within schools and colleges. We hope that this will encourage more young people to acknowledge our organisation as a worthwhile option when seeking work experience attachments.

The museum is also considering the feasibility of establishing formal links with higher education colleges and universities. Close liaison between museum staff, course tutors and students would facilitate the introduction of more specialised, project-based placements. Potentially, we could accommodate a wide range of academic and vocational disciplines: textile, design and conservation – utilising costume and toy collections to study technology, form and display; nursery nurses – exploring the use of object-handling to stimulate learning; tourism and marketing – surveying and

developing visitor services; history – undertaking collection research to investigate the social history of childhood; and heritage management and museum studies – gaining practical experience of a variety of museological skills. Such joint initiatives would enable students to acquire a different perspective on their chosen subject by working within an object-led, rather than textbook-led, environment, and the museum would benefit from an injection of new ideas and fresh creativity from recently trained professionals.

CHAPTER 7

# Prospects for Future Collaboration

*Hazel Moffat*

In several chapters of this book suggestions have been given for future developments in the provision of adult education by and with museums and galleries. There has been an emphasis on what museums and galleries consider to be realistic aspirations in the light of current resources and what, ideally, they would like to do. Major themes which adult education linked to museums and galleries might address are outlined and various fundamental changes are then discussed. Above all, the rich variety of case studies provides an inspiration to all museums and galleries by offering successful strategies both for working with groups of adults who have not traditionally made use of museum and gallery resources for educational purposes and for developing new ways of learning from collections. This chapter reviews briefly the broad base of educational provision for adults found in many museums and galleries along with links initiated by adult education institutions. It considers why it is essential for museums, galleries and adult education institutions to extend the scope of their work with adults. The challenges and opportunities they face in so doing have been identified in a wide selection of surveys. Finally this chapter recommends ways in which national and regional bodies can give support to enable museums, galleries and adult education institutions to collaborate in serving the needs of the adult population.

Museums and galleries already have a long-established tradition of contributing to adult education, in particular to non-vocational, liberal and lifelong learning. The very act of interpreting collections through a range of strategies is intended to assist understanding and facilitate learning. In this sense, museums and galleries have for many years provided informal learning opportunities

for adults through the written and non-written contexts given to collections. Then there are courses and lectures related to permanent and temporary exhibitions, which are provided regularly for the general public. Many museums and galleries do much more than this. Their staff give talks to local art, history, archaeology and natural history societies which often hold their meetings at museums and galleries. Groups such as women's organisations and the University of the Third Age have also arranged to have talks from curatorial and education staff. A continuing tradition is for such staff to contribute to adult education classes arranged by the WEA, university extra-mural departments and local authorities. Museums and galleries with Friends or membership organisations often arrange talks for them, although the numbers involved represent a small proportion of total visitors (Heaton, 1992).

Among recent innovations within museums and galleries, the National Gallery showed how its collection and scholarship could reach a far wider audience through the 'Painting the World' series of televised lectures given by its Director. Screened on BBC2 in the spring of 1995, the programmes gave viewers an opportunity to see details of selected paintings and hear fascinating explanations and interpretations of the images. Some museums are encouraging experts not traditionally involved with the public to take part in educational activities, as happened in the highly successful Conservation Week at Brighton's Royal Pavilion in November 1994. Conservators gave a series of talks and workshops to explain the skills and techniques used in restoring the Pavilion. A gratifying result for the staff was that attendance at the Pavilion increased by some 80 per cent during the week. One example from a local authority museum service shows the range of adult education now operating. Warwickshire's Museum and Archive Education Service launched a new programme of events and activities for adults called 'In Touch' in the spring of 1995. A sample of the programme illustrates how it is aiming to appeal to people with very varied interests and needs:

- a Saturday textiles workshop
- demonstrations on superconductivity in a shopping centre
- an evening session looking at wedding dresses and customs from the past to the present day (this presentation will be interpreted by sign language)

- a 90-minute session on identifying some museum wildlife specimens using 'high tech' equipment.

Museums are also developing outreach work with local communities and people in residential homes, hospitals and prisons. Underpinning much of this work is the conviction that adult education is not something done to or for adults by museums but a partnership which enables adults to do something for museums. Part of this process is where people contribute memories which can in turn become the theme of an exhibition. In one example, people living in an area of multiple deprivation in the north-east of Birmingham expressed their opinions of the changes in the area and recalled its history. Working with museum staff they created an exhibition, 'Take Heart', which toured a local library, health centre and community centre as well as the city's museum. This is the first time that many had come in contact with the museum.[1]

Adult education institutions also have long-established links with museums and galleries, and a few such as Morley College and Guildford Adult Education Institute have their own galleries. At the very least, there is the use of museum premises as accommodation for some adult education classes, although the displays are not necessarily a focus of attention. Some tutors arrange visits to museums and galleries as part of their courses and occasionally non-vocational courses are developed around particular museum collections. A local adult education centre, for example, has liaised with Hampton Court Palace to provide short lecture courses about the Palace. By booking through the Centre, course members were able to benefit from various concessionary rates.

An innovative partnership involving museums has contributed successfully to adult basic education, an area of adult education to which museums have not traditionally contributed. Funded by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU; now the Basic Skills Agency), one programme worked with 19 parents and their children and a local infant school in Cardiff during the summer term of 1994. This family literacy course aimed to develop the parents' literacy and communication skills so that they could be more effective in helping with the development of their children's literacy skills. The parents were also given the opportunity to gain accreditation for their improved standards of literacy through a City & Guilds Wordpower award. As part of the course, the parents went to the National Museum of Wales at St Fagans. The Educa-

tion Officer gave them useful background information about various topics and encouraged them to share family memories, giving the parents confidence in the learning processes involved in a visit to the museum. Not only did the visit generate written work by the parents, it also led to their deciding to revisit the museum with their children to share the knowledge they had gained (Smith *et al.*, 1994). ALBSU has funded similar programmes elsewhere which have forged partnerships with art and science museums.

It would be reasonable to ask why all this is not sufficient, especially when the majority of museums and galleries do not have education officers and have not necessarily put adult education high on their list of priorities. Why should museums and galleries consider extending further their educational work with adults? Firstly, museums and galleries have defined their role in terms of serving local, regional or national communities. They have a mission to collect, document, preserve, exhibit and interpret their collections for the public benefit. As part of the Code of Practice defined by the Museums Association, museums' governing bodies should 'make every effort to maintain and, wherever possible, enhance all aspects of its museums service in the interests of the public past, present and future by providing an educational, intellectual and cultural resource contributing to the welfare and development of society' (Museums Association, 1995).

Secondly, it is now generally acknowledged that a core function of museums and galleries is an educational one. This implies not only providing informal educational opportunities for casual visitors, but also increasing links with the formal education sector. Since the introduction of the GCSE in 1987 and the National Curriculum two years later in England and Wales, along with comparable changes in Northern Ireland and Scotland, much has been done to extend work with the schools sector. This has been of great value and has laid a foundation for developing projects with adult education institutions, by showing a willingness to liaise and respond to curricular changes. It is now timely to find ways of extending these links.

Thirdly, now that all museums and galleries have to look for varied sources of funding, they are under pressure to increase their visitor numbers to generate income. Moreover museums and galleries have to be accountable for the public funding they receive by showing that they give value for money; numbers of visitors can provide one indicator. Carefully targeted adult education strategies

built into the planning stages of new exhibitions could help to bring in new audiences.

Why should adult education providers improve their links with museums and galleries? By so doing they could give their students new learning opportunities. Where museums are the venue for courses, arranged, for example, by university extra-mural departments, the museum could be encouraged to mount a temporary exhibition to reflect the theme of the course. Class members could develop ideas for such an exhibition in co-operation with the museum. The long lead-in time for planning temporary exhibitions may discourage this type of collaboration unless museums could set aside one temporary exhibition slot a year which will have less than a year's planning time. Course work for some adult education classes could include presenting students' work as an exhibition. In the process course members will develop new skills. Just as tutors encourage the use of libraries, so they could promote the idea of visiting museums, and not only for the obvious links with archaeology, art, history and science courses. Basic literacy skills classes, advanced writers' groups, access courses, engineering courses, family and community care courses and English for speakers of other languages are some of the courses whose students could find a stimulus in local museums if their tutors planned the use of these resources. Finally, any adult education institution needs to maximise its use of learning resources in museums and galleries as part of effective and efficient management and in the interests of strengthening links with the local community.

What challenges and opportunities could affect an extension of museums' and galleries' provision of adult education? A range of recent surveys provides some pointers. One challenge is to attract non-visitors to museums as well as non-users of adult education provision. The review of museums' and galleries' own surveys published by the Museums and Galleries Commission suggests that lack of awareness about what they were offering, a lack of interest based on out-dated preconceptions about them, a feeling that they were not 'relevant' as well as a lack of time to make visits, all contributed to non-use (Davies, 1994a). Lack of awareness equally inhibits take-up within the adult education sector. Among the reasons given for not participating in such courses revealed in a 1994 survey of 794 non-users in Hampshire, were lack of familiarity with the programme on offer at their local Adult Education Centres and a belief that the courses were too expensive and only held in

the evenings. The survey found that 'higher socio-economic group respondents, those in the middle age ranges, those who had passed a recognised examination, and females tended to know more about the programmes at their local AE Centre than others. Nevertheless, awareness of the programme was relatively low amongst all sub-segments of this sample of non-users' (Miller, 1994). To reinforce the point about the lack of awareness, when non-users were asked about suitable venues for adult education classes, not one suggested museums. The most popular alternatives to schools were community centres, followed by hotels, halls, a leisure centre, a college, a youth club, any large building, a pub and a house.[7]

A second challenge is to match people's expectations of adult education which could vary from one area to another and from one age group to another. As part of the research project 'The education of adults in Europe', the Scottish interim report noted the results of consultation with 70 learners. They considered adult education should help to deal with a cluster of problems related to, for example, uncertainty and the meaning of life, unemployment and changes in the organisation of labour, interpersonal problems, distrust and ignorance of politics, social inequality and the inaccessibility of new technologies (Gerver and Owen, 1995). The Hampshire survey found the main reason for the majority of people attending a course was personal development. However, older respondents were more likely than younger ones to attend for social reasons (Miller, 1994). Museum and gallery collections were not made initially with these varied needs of the adult population in mind. Much therefore depends on how they are presented and interpreted and on the theme of exhibitions. Strategies for interpretation present a considerable challenge. They have often presupposed that adults will be familiar and confident with the process of assimilating knowledge and ideas from looking at displays, displays moreover which might make few concessions to visitors' background knowledge, interests or reading ability. On the one hand museums and galleries offer a potentially rich learning environment where individuals are free to select the pace and extent of their engagement with exhibitions. On the other hand the very nature of the chosen interpretation may create a barrier unless it is possible to have some form of interaction with the display. Even that, in the case of exhibits demonstrating scientific principles, may not convey understanding (Macdonald, 1992). One solution is to have access to a mediator 'conversant with available

resources relevant to their specific needs of the moment' (Stannett, 1993). Not only interpretation but the very themes of exhibitions could be reviewed in the light of communities' interests. The need for this fundamental reappraisal has been summed up thus: 'It is time to adopt a wider social purpose and define more explicitly what contribution museums and art galleries are making to society' (Davies, 1994b).

A related challenge is to provide a sufficient range of learning strategies for adults. Discussions were held with two groups of adults away from museums and galleries. Ten people who were registering for adult education courses were asked their views on learning activities provided by museums. (Eight of the randomly selected group had visited museums in the past year.) All were asked which of the following activities in museums interested them:

- being able to handle objects
- listening to a short talk
- using a computer in a display
- looking at reference books
- joining a guided tour
- browsing around and watching videos in the displays.

One person was interested in all the activities except watching a video, others chose between two and five activities, the most popular of which was simply browsing around (8 people), followed by listening to a short talk (6 people). One man in his 60s felt that most of the learning activities he had seen were more applicable to children.[3] A second group of 10 people in the 20 to 80 age range, two of whom at the younger end of the age range rarely visited museums and none of whom was involved in adult education, expressed a broad range of preferences. All but two in this group enjoyed hands-on activities but not surprisingly older people were less likely to want to use a computer. When asked what other learning strategies museums could provide, responses ranged from being able to try on replica clothes to having labels which pose questions. One woman in her 50s pointed out the need for museums and galleries to provide good facilities such as clear signposting around the building, a cafeteria and somewhere comfortable to sit if she and her family were to stay in a museum long enough to take advantage of all the learning strategies.[4]

A final challenge is to provide programmes in museums and galleries which are accessible to potential visitors. One national survey, by the Compass Group, casts doubt on the value of providing lunchtime lectures in museums and galleries if it is expected that workers will attend. Time taken for lunch breaks has decreased, the typical lunch break now being 32 minutes, with 51 per cent of workers taking half-an-hour or less. For many people, there is simply not time to fit in a half-hour talk in a museum or gallery. For some sectors of the local communities day-time programmes are ideal, where people might not be willing or able to go out in the evening. Others could only benefit if museums and galleries opened in the evenings or provided varied programmes at weekends. Linked to this issue is the fact that in some parts of the country there is a shortage of daytime provision for adult education (OFSTED, 1994a). Is the adult education sector making enough use of museum and gallery premises?

Other issues of accessibility are equally important. Exhibitions and programmes must be physically accessible to as many people as possible and publicity targeted carefully so that the people who need to know do know. Programmes and some support materials need to take account of the very varied learning needs of potential participants. Programmes must be affordable. In some local and national museums and galleries, both entry to the building and the lecture or activity is free. Many museums and galleries have to make charges for a variety of reasons but need to be aware of what can be afforded. In the adult education sector concessions are offered for a variety of reasons to do with age, disability and if receiving unemployment benefit or income support. In North Kent, for example, 30 per cent of people involved in adult education programmes receive a variety of concessions (OFSTED, 1993). The survey of non-users in Hampshire showed that they would be willing to pay a mean of £27.56 for a 10-week course with an examination at the end (Miller, 1994).

The challenges are considerable, but so too are the opportunities. One set of opportunities is provided by knowing who is likely to participate in the learning experience within museums.

Two surveys point to the potential for appealing to older people. The 'Age Watch Survey' commissioned by the BBC in 1994 suggested that half the retired people in the survey were taking educational courses. By 2021 it is estimated that there will be a 40 per cent increase in the over-50 age group, an age group moreover

which is becoming more active mentally and physically (Maps, 1995). Such general surveys can give useful indications to potential visitors, but targeting visitors on the basis of age alone is considered a high-risk strategy (Davies, 1994a). For the great majority of museums the key opportunities are with the particular communities who live in their localities. Both museum and adult education surveys have found that many visitors/participants live within a travelling time of 30 minutes of the venue (Miller, 1994).

For national museums with much larger numbers of visitors from beyond the immediate local area, it is equally necessary to determine visitors' learning needs and their response to the adult education provision. The National Portrait Gallery, for example, has reviewed the composition of participants in its weekday and weekend lectures. As a result it has identified the gender, age profile and preferences of participants, whether they are regular attenders, the types of lectures and events they enjoy and the subjects of most interest. There were 330 respondents to the survey, carried out over three months in the autumn of 1994. Almost three-quarters lived within one hour's travelling time of the gallery and about two-thirds attended at least once a month. Sixteen per cent were attending for the first time. Sixty per cent of respondents were aged 61 and over and in this group there were more than twice as many women as men. Respondents were very satisfied with the service. While retaining the loyalty of its regular attenders, the gallery now aims to increase the numbers of younger people attending.[5]

Other opportunities stem from understanding issues and interests of concern to local communities irrespective of people's educational and social background. How can the expertise of staff and the nature of collections relate to macro-environmental issues, for example, and special interest groups, be they interested in music, cookery, fashion, gardening, home decorating or collecting? For some people, museums and galleries have a great advantage in not being seen as overtly educational institutions, rather places to visit for recreation. Taking the first steps towards becoming involved in visiting exhibitions and events, then joining a workshop or class can provide confidence in learning which can open doors to more formal learning experiences. For others, museums and galleries can provide a welcome opportunity to delve deeper into specialist interests, whether using museums' natural history databases or historical archives, for example. Only by listening to the needs of their communities can museums and galleries provide a context for

their collections and programmes which will encourage participation by adults in the particular learning processes they offer.

Yet more opportunities can come from diversifying the types of adult education provision, as two examples show. The increasing commitment to the training of museum and gallery staff has highlighted the many types of qualifications which can improve skills and competences. This direct involvement in a form of adult education, continuing professional development, has given museum staff first-hand experience of ways of learning, types of accreditation and matching learning outcomes to the needs of visitors. Some museums (ranging from the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside to the Clan Donald Lands Trust in Skye) have now received the Investors in People award in recognition of this commitment to training. As a result, museums and galleries could work with local employers to develop learning experiences of benefit to the local work-force and take advantage of the National Targets for Education and Training.

The second example shows how museums are making use of information technology to give adults access to data. The National Museums of Scotland have developed a program – MOSAICS – which will be accessible via the Internet. Local libraries will give communities remote from Edinburgh an opportunity to use the material, and the bilingual text is providing adults at Skye College, for example, with information in Gaelic. Adults will be able to interrogate the data about individual objects, asking such questions as "how was it made?", and "where was it found?".

A final set of opportunities depends on staff in museums, galleries and adult education institutions acknowledging some goals which they have in common and finding ways to make the best use of each other's expertise. When planning new programmes there could be some consultation about what the two sectors have in mind. New exhibitions, when at the planning stage, could well benefit from a consideration of the most effective learning strategies for adults which could be built into displays and associated materials. To facilitate consultation, contact could be developed between museums, galleries and joint adult continuing education advisory panels, where these have been established.

If museums, galleries and adult education institutions are to respond to all the challenges and opportunities, they need the support of national and regional bodies. The Department of National Heritage instigated a national report on museum education in 1993.

During 1994 and 1995 a major survey of education provision was undertaken and colloquia arranged, one of which focused on adult education. The findings of this consultative process will contribute to the final report. The Department needs to follow through this major initiative by ensuring that consultation and debate is turned into policy and action to promote the educational use of museums by adults as well as children.

The Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) has strengthened its commitment to access and education in museums and galleries through the appointment of a staff member with specific responsibilities for them. The MGC is thus developing strategies for supporting museums and galleries in these important areas. It could consider how liaison with government departments such as the Department for Education and Employment and the Scottish Office Education Department, funding bodies for further and higher education, consultative bodies such as the Forum for Adult Education in Scotland and organisations such as NIACE can underpin efforts to develop collaboration at a local level and can influence policy decisions. It could also include commentary and recommendations about the provision for adult learners in its reports on museums and galleries. The Commission's report on *Local Authorities and Museums*, for example, reflected concern about museum education for school groups but although educational provision for adults was implicit in its review of the economic and social importance of museums, no recommendations were made about links with the adult education sector (MGC, 1991).

Through their training role, Area Museum Councils (AMCs) can enable museum and gallery staff to develop an increased understanding of the needs of adult learners. Of the nine AMCs in Great Britain, seven have focused on this issue in 1994–95 in a variety of ways. They have, for example, defined the needs of adult learners as a prerequisite for developing training programmes for museum staff. As a result of attending a two-day course arranged by the North West Museums Service, which included advice on how adults learn, education staff at Ellesmere Port Boat Museum trained volunteers to be aware of some aspects of adult learners' needs when giving guided tours to adults at the museum. The North of England Museums Service has pioneered a programme to give museum staff competence in foreign languages the better to explain collections to overseas visitors and to communicate with overseas museums. As part of the project, this AMC has published

learning materials and a 'Language Training Guide' to help staff define their personal objectives, identify their learning requirements and clarify the nature of the challenge facing the language tutor. The North of England Museums Service has also initiated 'Welcome Signs', a project to improve access to a wide range of adult education programmes for visitors with hearing impairments. In 1993 six museum staff started to learn British Sign Language, which they can then use whether conducting a guided tour, an art workshop or an historical re-enactment. Staff in 12 museums are now involved in the second phase of the 'Welcome Signs' scheme.

AMCs could build on the training provided so far to give museum and gallery staff, whether curators, designers or education staff, a greater understanding of how their adult visitors learn. Some of this training could be delivered in collaboration with staff in higher education institutions responsible for training adult education tutors and with experienced tutors in local adult education services. Through their newsletters, AMCs could also share examples of successful innovations in adult education. They could assist museums and galleries in their regions by publicising their exhibitions and programmes for adults to other adult education providers. AMCs could alert museums and galleries to any surveys of adult education commissioned by local authorities which might help in identifying potential opportunities for collaboration. Finally where AMCs allocate small grants to support education projects, they could encourage member museums and galleries to seek support for adult education projects.

There are two other key national bodies, the Museums Association and the Association of Independent Museums, both of which give professional support such as preparing occasional papers for their members. A paper which concentrated on adult education could do much to inform the associations' members about the range of adult education provision which could benefit from liaison with museums. The associations could also keep members in touch with developments in the adult education sector, as the *Museums Journal* did in giving details of Adult Learners' Week in 1995. As part of this celebration, organisations which have designed and delivered programmes which can stand as models of excellence are eligible for awards (Middleton, 1995). Both associations could be proactive in representing museums' interests in the adult education world. Adult Learners' Week for example has an advisory group with representatives of adult education bodies, tele-

vision companies and the Library Association (NIACE, 1994). Why is there not a museums' representative, too, and an award for an adult learner who has gained significantly by using museum resources, just as there is for a library user?

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) in England has a duty to inspect and report on the quality of education, the standards achieved and the efficient use of resources in adult education which is funded by Local Education Authorities (OFSTED, 1994b). This involves the Office of HMCI, known as OFSTED, in inspecting LEA provision and undertaking regular monitoring of trends in adult education. The inspection process is determined by a framework which specifies evaluation criteria and quality descriptors. As a result, inspection reports should yield evidence of, among other things, consultation between the adult education service and other local providers, the extent to which community activities stimulate interests, skills and awareness which are relevant to local issues and the community's environment and culture, and the effective use of equipment and materials and fitness for purpose. Although museums and galleries are not mentioned specifically, these evaluation criteria and one quality descriptor ('widespread consultation and collaboration with other providers should be reflected in policy statements') suggest that OFSTED expects adult education providers to be developing links with them. A scrutiny of recent OFSTED reports on adult education shows no reference to such links. Given the presence of museums and galleries in or near all LEAs, OFSTED should seek to determine where collaboration between them and the adult education service exists.

HM Inspectors undertook a survey of adult education in 33 museums and galleries in 1987 which reviewed the overall provision and assessed the quality of selected adult education sessions. The survey concluded that much was being done to enhance the educational opportunities in the communities served by the museums and galleries while acknowledging some institutions' concerns about the lack of time, staff and funds to develop this work further (DES, 1988). It is now desirable that HM Inspectors undertake a further survey of collaborative projects between adult education services and museums and galleries. This should identify strategies and practices which lead to effective collaboration. Ideally such a survey should be done in conjunction with HM Inspectors elsewhere in the UK.

NIACE has shown its commitment to adult education and museums and galleries by publishing this book. This national body could also encourage debate on this collaboration in its journals. There have been very few articles in any UK adult education journals on learning in museums and galleries. Where there are current research projects into adult education, such as at the Universities of Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow (Gerver and Owen, 1995), NIACE could act as a channel to disseminate findings to the museum sector and monitor the extent to which research into adult education takes account of the contribution made by museums and galleries. NIACE could be a most effective ally for museums and galleries by keeping the issue of collaboration between them and the adult education sector to the fore.

An agenda for change was suggested by Alan Chadwick in 1987. It would be helpful to summarise the suggestions he made then to see whether similar factors still apply. Chadwick pointed out that museums catered for an unrepresentative section of the population and so advocated that museums needed to adopt a rationale which would provide more learning opportunities for a wider range of adults. Not only were more interactive opportunities necessary, but the themes of exhibitions needed to address the interests of far more people, without avoiding controversial issues. Chadwick stressed the need to train museum staff, for example, to help adults plan their own learning activities. He finally called for more collaboration between museums and other institutions in order to help adult learners gain access to materials and individuals with expertise (Chadwick, 1987).

Many museums and galleries have extended the range of adults visiting and participating in their programmes since 1987, but few would claim that everything identified by Chadwick has been achieved. Chadwick's agenda is still relevant. However, there is an added dimension to consider. Staff in museums, galleries and adult education institutions need the support of national and regional organisations if the innovations being introduced are to have wider currency. Government departments, funding bodies and professional associations must be committed to increasing the number of adults who benefit from a full range of educational opportunities in museums and galleries and take the necessary steps to accomplish it.

## *Notes*

1. 'Let the people speak: community heritage'. Conference at St Mary's University College, 25 November 1994.
2. Author's unpublished data collected for this chapter.
3. Author's unpublished data collected for this chapter.
4. 'Recession cuts nineties lunch hour in half', *The Independent*, 10 January 1995, quoting Compass Group survey.
5. Unpublished data supplied by the National Portrait Gallery for this chapter.

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